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A social history of the Mesquakie Indians, 1800–1963

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A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE MESQUAKIE INDIANS,

1800 - 1963

by

Richard Frank Brown

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
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"We are the Mesquakie, we are Indians,
we are not white men and we are not going to
disappear."

The Tama News-Herald
16 April 1953

INTRODUCTION

The Mesquakie Indians, now living at Tama, Iowa, physically repelled domination by the white man during the first early contact in Wisconsin, and thus resisted unwanted cultural influences. Yet the Mesquakie did incorporate those white cultural traits which seemed valuable to them and which fitted their own cultural framework. Then when the ever growing population and greater military force of the white man pushed other Indian tribes off their land and onto reservations, the Mesquakie began to purchase land from the whites and thus secured title to their land. This ability to use the white man's laws to preserve their own traditional way of life makes the Mesquakie Indians unique in the history of Indian-white relations.

By purchasing land from the white man, and thus escaping the reservation life that still held their Indian brothers, the Mesquakie managed to reverse a downward population trend that had reduced their numbers from two thousand in 1804 to less than seven hundred in 1850.

Then for about fifty years they lived relatively free of white domination. This freedom gave them time to establish themselves as an independent minority group in the local white community. Beginning in 1896, the State of Iowa transferred jurisdiction over the Indians to the federal government. Thus began a new period of ever increasing control over the

Mesquakie by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs. This close control over the Mesquakie actually hindered their opportunity to make their own decisions regarding their future. The stated purpose of the Indian Bureau's policy of assimilating the Indians into white society, with the eventual disappearance of the tribal group, failed completely.

The narrative that follows recounts the history of the Mesquakie Indian's struggle to retain their tribal identity in a white man's world.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS, TO 1800

The Mesquakie Nation belongs to the Algonkin language group, and their culture is that of Eastern woodland tribes with some intrusive streaks from the plains Indian tribes. Their social organization is rigidly based on family groupings called clans or gens, and they believe in a cosmic substance which they call Gitchi Manitu, or Great Spirit.¹

Early in their history, the Mesquakie emigrated to Detroit from near the St. Lawrence to escape from savage encounters with the Iroquois and Wyandot tribes.² The Mesquakie then left Detroit and established themselves at Saginaw Bay along the shores of Lake Michigan.³ Pressure from the Chippewa, Pottawatomie, and Ottawa drove the Mesquakie across Lake Michigan to the region south of Lake Superior where French traders found them in the middle of the 17th Century.⁴

These early French traders designated the Mesquakie as Fox Indians, and this misnomer has persisted to this day. The mistake in the name occurred around 1650 when French traders met a small hunting party of Mesquakie in the Lake Winnebago area. The traders asked the Mesquakie what name they went by. The Indians misunderstood and thought the Frenchmen wanted to know the clan name of the hunting party. Because this group of Indians belonged to the Fox clan of the Mesquakie tribe, the Indians gave the traders the clan name. Hence the French

erroneously referred to this Indian nation as the Fox Indians.⁵ The Indians prefer the name Mesquakie. The name Mesquakie means Red Earth Nation and distinguishes this nation from their close cousins the Ousaukie (Sauk) or the Yellow Earth Nation. According to Indian legend, the two nations originally were one people, but then split and occupied opposite shores of a lake. The Mesquakie lived on the shore with red sand, and the Sauk lived on the side with yellow sand.⁶

The next contact with white men came around 1670 when two Frenchmen, Perrot and Baudry, visited the Mesquakie village on the Wolf River, Wisconsin. The two men observed that the Indians lived in a very primitive state of barbarism, with five metal hatchets as the only evidence of European civilization. Other early travelers described the Mesquakie as arrogant, avaricious, thieving, and quarrelsome.

The Mesquakie were the most fierce and most interesting of the Wisconsin tribes. They managed to maintain their primitive independence longer than any other Wisconsin tribe because of their great courage and determination to live as their forefathers did. The Mesquakie raised as many children as possible and trained them for the same savage resistance to civilization.⁷ They fought against the French for two generations and were the only tribe against whom the French waged war in the 18th Century.⁸ During this time the Mesquakie continually harassed the French by exacting tribute from their traders and by attacking French forts.⁹ When Mesquakie

hostility toward the French continued to hinder their plans to dominate the West, the French attempted first to subjugate and then to exterminate the tribe.¹⁰

When the Mesquakie attacked the Indian tribes clustered about Fort Detroit in the winter of 1711, the French provided refuge for these tribes and then aided them in a nineteen day battle against the Mesquakie. The allied French and Indian forces practically annihilated the entire group of one thousand Mesquakie warriors. A few Mesquakie escaped to Green Bay where they joined a band of four hundred warriors that had not taken part in the attack at Detroit.¹¹ An uneasy peace followed for a number of years, but in a battle at Starved Rock in La Salle County, Illinois, in 1730, the French again defeated a number of Mesquakie warriors. The few remaining survivors settled on the Wisconsin River near the Mississippi River. In 1733, they went to live at Green Bay where they formed a close alliance with their cousins, the Sauk Indians.¹²

The French demanded that the Sauk give up the Mesquakie refugees. When the Sauk refused, the French threatened to retaliate against both nations. In self defense, the two nations migrated into the western half of Illinois some time prior to 1750 where they refrained from further hostile action against the French.¹³

The long bitter conflict with the French had convinced the Mesquakie that they could not successfully fight against the white man. Thus during the last half of the 18th Century,

the Mesquakie decided to live in peace with the white man. The Sauk, however, became increasingly belligerent toward the whites as the 18th Century came to a close. Both the Sauk and Mesquakie continued their wars against other Indian tribes, however. In the years from 1785 to 1800, they succeeded in partially subjugating the Iowa tribes and prior to 1800, the Mesquakie and Sauk lived together on land in the eastern half of Iowa and the western half of Illinois. Because the Mesquakie and Sauk nations shared the same culture and occupied the same geographical area, the United States Government often referred to the two nations as one people--the Sac and Fox. The Mesquakie remained politically independent from the Sauk, however, and thus preserved their identity.¹⁴

CHAPTER II

BETRAYAL: THE TREATY OF 1804

During the early part of the 19th Century, the Indians along the Mississippi River still lived in an area relatively free of white men, except for the traders that visited them. But then, under President Thomas Jefferson, the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory, which brought the Indians on both sides of the Mississippi River into the territory of the United States. The problem of how to secure the Indian lands for white settlement came under the jurisdiction of William Henry Harrison, Governor of Indian Territory. In a letter to Governor Harrison in 1803, President Jefferson

. . . advocated encouraging the influential chiefs to go into debt, 'because we observe that when these debts go beyond what the individual can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands.'¹⁵

With this letter, the United States began its almost fifty year struggle with the Sac and Fox to acquire Indian lands for white settlement.

Meanwhile, the continual fighting between the Sac and Fox and the Osage Indians set up a chain of events that inadvertently aided Harrison in solving his problem. In an attempt to protect the lives of settlers in the area, the government tried to stop the war parties sent out by the Sac and Fox. As a result, the Sac and Fox believed the Osage occupied a favored position with the United States because

the whites feared them. Some members of the Sac and Fox felt that if they could cause the United States to fear them also, they could fight the Osage without interference.¹⁶

With this thought in mind, a small party of Sauk warriors attacked a band of Osage as they returned to St. Louis by boat in the spring of 1804. The Sauk killed some Osage, and took others prisoner. From there, the Indians went to a white settlement on Cuivre River, north of St. Louis, and scalped three settlers. This started rumors of war which frightened the settlers into appealing to St. Louis for ammunition and reinforcements. The Sauk, fearful of reprisals, began to abandon their villages, yet, diplomatically, they sent a delegation of two Sauk chiefs to St. Louis to discuss the matter of retribution for their crime. At St. Louis, the chiefs agreed to bring in the four Indians responsible for the murder of the white settlers.

While the Indians sought out the guilty parties, Governor Harrison arrived in St. Louis to reorganize governmental operations so the district of Louisiana could be attached to the Indian Territory for administrative purposes. The Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn, had also instructed Harrison to negotiate a treaty with the Sac and Fox and to procure from them the land on both sides of the Illinois River.¹⁷

In November of 1804, a deputation of four Sauk and one Mesquakie arrived in St. Louis with one of the men involved in the Cuivre River killings. The Sauk tribal council had

instructed these men to gain the freedom of the guilty man by "wiping away the tears of the deceased ones" according to Indian custom--that is, to materially pay for the persons killed.

Harrison took advantage of his position to broach the subject of a treaty. In order to increase the Indians' willingness to listen, Harrison distributed among them over \$2,000 in goods and finery, including a great deal of liquor.¹⁸

The five Indians put their mark on the treaty on November 3, 1804. The treaty established the boundaries of the area sold for which the United States agreed to pay the Indians \$2,234.50 in cash plus an annuity of \$1,000 per year (\$600 for Sauk - \$400 for Fox) which could be paid in domestic animals, agricultural implements or other farm utensils.¹⁹ The Indians could remain on the land until the government sold it. The United States promised to provide a factory (trading house) conveniently located for the Indians' use. The government reserved, however, the right to establish a fort near the mouth of the Wisconsin River, on Indian land if necessary.²⁰

The members of the Sauk and Mesquakie nations did not learn of the sale of their lands until the delegation returned dressed with medals and fine coats. The members of the delegation remembered only that they had signed some sort of treaty that ceded a small amount of land, but they could remember little else of the negotiations. Apparently they

had been drunk most of the time.²¹

When the Mesquakie learned what had happened in St. Louis, they became quite angry with the Sauk. They saw the treaty as a direct result of the Sauk's belligerent attitude toward the white man--an attitude which the Mesquakie did not share. What is more, in honoring the treaty, the Sauk had allowed one band to speak for all the Indians.²² According to the custom of the Mesquakie, unless the tribal council, which represented all the important clans of the tribe, unanimously approved a particular course of action, no action could be taken.²³ Thus the Mesquakie believed (or perhaps, led themselves to believe) that the treaty was void. The Mesquakie were aided in this belief by the fact that they still lived on the land. They probably did not know that the treaty stipulated that they could live on the land until the government sold it to the white settlers.

Because of the difference in political attitudes and the ill feeling generated by the treaty, the Mesquakie drew further away from the Sauk and the entire tribe moved to the Iowa side of the Mississippi River.²⁴

CHAPTER III

THE MESQUAKIE WAY OF LIFE

After signing the treaty, the Sauk remained for the most part on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River living at their largest village, Saukenauk. Saukenauk lay on the north side of the Rock River at the point where that river enters the Mississippi River. From a bluff at the rear of the village, the gently sloping prairie land descended to the banks of the Mississippi. On the land in front of the village, the Sauk planted their corn fields. These fields extended northward, parallel to the river for about two miles, where they joined the corn fields of the Mesquakie who lived on the western shore. Altogether the two nations cultivated 800 acres. Their crops included corn, beans, pumpkins, and squashes. The land around the village grew bluegrass which provided forage for the horses.²⁵

The Sauk occupied two more villages near the mouth of the Des Moines River--one near the present town of Keokuk, Iowa, the other near Nauvoo, Illinois. Another band lived at the mouth of the Iowa River.²⁶

The Mesquakie resided in three villages, the main one on the west side of the Mississippi River opposite Saukenauk. They had a second village twelve miles to the west of the lead mines at Dubuque and a third near the mouth of the Turkey River north of Dubuque.²⁷ In all the Mesquakie numbered

approximately 2,000 people, while the Sauk numbered about 4,000.²⁸

In the years from 1804 to 1832, despite the ever widening breach caused by the Treaty of St. Louis, the Sauk and Mesquakie continued to share the same hunting grounds in eastern Iowa. Each fall, traders went to the villages to give the Indians (on credit) clothing, traps, and other essentials that they required for their nomadic treks. The Indians and traders held a council to determine the price to be paid for the skins and the cost of the goods credited to the Indians.²⁹ After telling the traders the location of the winter hunting grounds, the Indians dispersed in small groups, their ponies laden with mats for their wickiups. The squaws followed the ponies and when the time came to make camp, the women pitched the tents and cooked the food.³⁰ The bands traveled up the Des Moines, Iowa, and Turkey Rivers into the interior of the Iowa country to the area they planned to hunt. The hunters left the old people at the winter hunting encampment previously agreed upon so that the traders could care for them should the need arise. When the weather became too severe for hunting, the Indians returned to this encampment laden with skins and spent the remainder of the winter engaged in feasting, playing cards, and other pastimes.³¹

They built their winter lodges in a form somewhat resembling a large baking oven, made by placing eight poles in the ground in an oval shape and then bending them toward the center

to overlap each other. The Indians then covered the framework with reed mats, but left a hole at one end to serve as a door. They placed a bear skin over the door to keep out the cold. In the center of the wickiup, the squaw made a fire and cut a hole in the top of the wickiup to let the smoke out.³² Each member of the family had his own sleeping place in the dark, smoky wickiup where he kept his own personal possessions. Piles of skins and blankets placed on reed mats served to raise him above the cold, bare ground.³³

Near the end of winter, the young men started on the beaver hunt, while others went to hunt raccoons and muskrats. The remainder of the people went to the maple sugar camps. Before anyone left the encampment, the council decided upon a place to meet in the spring.³⁴

During the month of April, the entire band met at the place agreed upon, and all groups returned to the summer village together as a protection against hostile tribes. This method also insured that no one would arrive at the camp first and dig up his neighbors' store of food.³⁵ Once at their summer home, the Sac and Fox built their oblong bark summer houses with a bench on each side used for sitting, eating, and sleeping. The Indians placed a door at each end of the summer house.³⁶ The men then finished trading goods with the traders who always followed the tribe to their villages. To climax the winter hunt the tribe held a great medicine feast. Then the women began preparations for summer by repairing the fences

around the fields and planting the corn.³⁷

In the Sac and Fox community, each member of the family kept busy with his own special duties and obligations. The woman owned the dwelling and the implements used in cultivating the soil, preparing the food, dressing the skins, and in making garments and tent covers. The woman had to plant the crops, carry on the household duties, and rear the children. In some cases her work was lightened somewhat by the children and old men.³⁸ The man owned his own clothing, weapons, and ceremonial paraphernalia. He did all the trapping, hunting, and fishing. These occupations proved quite hazardous and sometimes fatal. The man alone bore arms. He had charge of important ceremonial and religious rites. He made his own hunting and war implements, which consumed a great deal of time.³⁹

For meals, the squaws prepared venison with corn and beans from the garden. The Indians also ate fish, dog, pork, and wild fowl prepared in various ways. Sometimes the squaws rolled a fish or other piece of meat in clay or in leaves and baked the meat in the coals of the fire. They prepared potatoes, green corn, and other vegetables in the same way.⁴⁰ Usually, however, the women boiled everything in a stew placed in a kettle over an open fire at night. In the morning, the family ate whatever they wanted. The women ordinarily prepared only one cooked meal a day, and the family ate whenever they were hungry.⁴¹

When eating, the Sac and Fox used spoons of horn or shell,

or just their fingers. After the squaws served the men, the women and children ate. The children often ran outside where they fought for possession of their food with the hordes of hungry dogs that hung around the village. At the end of the meal the man usually went outside with his pipe and joined other men under the trees. There they played games of chance or recounted heroic deeds performed during the winter. The boys usually set out on an expedition to shoot squirrels with bows and arrows or went down to the river to play and swim. The young men gambled or raced ponies just outside the village. The smaller children, fat, naked, and greasy, tumbled about the summer house with the puppies or rolled about in the dust outside. After clearing and washing the dishes, the women went out to finish tanning deerskin used in making clothes, moccasins, and other necessities.⁴²

When the corn reached knee height, the Sac and Fox held a national dance. The young men then left for the west to hunt deer, buffalo, and Sioux.⁴³

The women and old men remained to collect rushes for mats, and bark to make bags for their corn. During these hot summer months, the women boiled, hammered, and twisted bark into fine twine by which the rushes could be tied together to form mats. Some women made as many as three hundred mats during the course of the summer. The Mesquakie who lived near Dubuque sometimes worked in the lead mines and dug as much as 4,000 to 5,000 pounds of lead during a single season.⁴⁴

Later in the summer the braves returned with dried buffalo, venison, and Sioux scalps. Each returning party brought presents and the Sac and Fox held feasts and visited with friends until corn-picking time.⁴⁵

The men devoted considerable time to religious ceremonies, dancing, storytelling, races, gambling, mock war battles, contests, and games such as la crosse.⁴⁶ After picking their corn and securing it for the winter, the Indians then made preparations to go on the winter hunt, and thus began another year in the unchanging life cycle of the Sac and Fox Indians.

A close relationship existed between the Mesquakie concepts of power in religion and government. Both depended on an impersonal supernatural power called manitu. A man could prove his possession of this manitu by his continued success in various undertakings. But success in one venture did not insure success in the next. Because the possession of this religious power was dangerous, the Mesquakie considered it hazardous and immoral for one man to exercise too much control over another. Thus, the Mesquakie possessed extreme individualism in comparison with other tribes.

The Mesquakie had three principal chiefs. The civil chief occupied his position by inheritance, usually passed through the male members of the Bear family. The civil chief encouraged harmonious relations within the group and acted as an arbiter in the event of dissension in council meetings. The war chief acquired his position as the result of a vision

which indicated that he possessed the manitu. Thus anyone could lead a war party. In practice, however, the size of the war party depended upon the past success of the leader and upon the degree of excitement that the telling of the vision aroused in the volunteers. The war leader merely suggested what the group should do. If the majority of his volunteers dissented, he then had to come up with a fresh suggestion or vision. The third chief, the ceremonial leader, included anyone who memorized one or more of the religious rituals. He exercised his powers only for the duration of the ritual in which he played a part. In addition to these weak leaders, the Mesquakie also possessed a council composed of the head men of each of the extended family or clan groupings. The council could not take any action on a particular issue unless the members of the council had unanimously approved such action. Because every family had a representative on the council, public opinion automatically governed the decisions of the tribe.⁴⁷

In lieu of a police force, the Mesquakie depended upon social pressure to keep tribal members in line. This social pressure served quite effectively to prevent most of the crimes that occurred in white societies. Each day at daylight, a chief or principal man usually went through the village advising the people on how to conduct themselves. The Mesquakie seldom used severe corporal punishment on their children. Instead the mothers usually blackened the face

of the offender and made him go without eating the entire day.⁴⁸

CHAPTER IV

THE DECLINE OF INDIAN POWER

Soon after the Treaty of 1804, President Thomas Jefferson devised a plan to change the roving habits of the Sac and Fox Indians. Jefferson believed that if the Indians turned their attention entirely to agriculture, they would see the futility in roving, and settle down to live in peace with the white man.⁴⁹ To implement Jefferson's policy, General James Wilkinson, Governor of Louisiana Territory, appointed William Ewing as instructor in agriculture for the Sac and Fox Indians living along the Mississippi River. Governor Harrison supplied Ewing with agricultural implements at St. Louis. Harrison then sent Ewing with a French trader and interpreter, Louis Honore, into Sac and Fox country with instructions to expand the farming activities of the Indians. Ewing expected to take part in an exciting adventure, but soon found himself in a position requiring a missionary's zeal. The Sac and Fox disliked Ewing's intrusion into their affairs, and did not want or need his help. In fact, the Indian squaws knew more about farming than their instructor. Without ever using a plow, they annually harvested several hundred acres of corn and often sold some of this corn to the trader at Prairie du Chien. Ewing knew the practical side of Pennsylvania farming, but he lacked experience and thus could not adequately handle the problems that he encountered.⁵⁰ When Ewing failed to

produce the results desired by the government, he fell under increasing criticism from his superiors. When Secretary of War Dearborn appointed Nicolas Boilvan to the position of Indian agent for the Sac and Fox in 1806, the Secretary also charged the agent with the general supervision of the farm project. The Secretary instructed Boilvan to reside at the rapids of the Mississippi River, keep out the liquor, prevent acts of hostility by either side, teach the Indians the art of agriculture and domestic manufacture, furnish a blacksmith, and introduce plows as soon as the chiefs agreed to use them.⁵¹ Boilvan too, found fault with Ewing's work. In 1807, the President appointed William Clark superintendent for all Indian tribes except the Osage. Clark accused Ewing of making unauthorized purchases in the name of the government, and of trading whiskey to the Indians for their guns. Then when the Indians had to have the guns or starve, Ewing reportedly sold the guns back at high prices.⁵² Superintendent Clark finally dismissed Ewing in the fall of 1807.

The attempt to interest the Sac and Fox Indians in the pursuit of farming failed because it did not offer them a better life than the one they already had. For centuries they had lived on deer and bear killed in the forests, fish caught in nearby streams, mallards and blue geese brought down with bow and arrow or with buckshot. The government expected the Indians to trade all this for a life as cowmilkers and hog herdsman, a life that tied them to animals that needed

constant attention, a life of eating salt pork and stringy beef. Furthermore, only by maintaining their roving habits could the Indians obtain the valuable furs necessary for bargaining with traders.⁵³

Between 1804 and 1816, British traders continued to travel through the Sac and Fox country kindling Indian opposition to the Americans. The Mesquakie, unhappy about the Treaty of St. Louis, proved fertile ground for these British traders. For the traders played on and increased the Indians' dissatisfaction over the goods supplied them by the 1804 treaty. They supplied the Indians with goods of the very best quality which had been manufactured especially for them. The traders charged high prices for their wares, but the goods met the Indians' needs.⁵⁴

On the other hand, the Indians found the American goods almost worthless. In a personal narrative published in Van der Zee's, "Old Fort Madison: Source Materials," the author (unknown) stated that "at first the goods were laughed at, ridiculed by the Indians." The small, thin blankets provided little protection against the cold. The calico cloth did not hold together, and the springs on the traps broke continually due to the poor quality of the materials.⁵⁵ The goods for the first annuity payment were so bad that Governor James Wilkinson and Governor Harrison had to sell the goods for what they could get, and then purchase better supplies from merchants in St. Louis.⁵⁶

In 1808, a party of soldiers went up the Des Moines River in keel boats and erected Fort Madison at a point fifteen miles above the mouth of the river. The erection of the fort greatly agitated the Sac and Fox who did not want an American fort in their country.⁵⁷ The Indians had good reason to be indignant over the erection of a fort so far into the interior of their country. According to the Treaty of 1804, the government reserved the right to erect a fort in Indian territory, but at a point near the Wisconsin River.⁵⁸ In an attempt to placate the angry Indians, the soldiers told the Sac and Fox that they were erecting buildings for a trader who would sell goods to the Indians very cheaply. The soldiers claimed they came along to provide company for the trader.⁵⁹

The assurance of the soldiers failed to placate the Indians, and in April of 1808, a band of Sauk attacked the fort by using a game of la crosse as a ruse. The commandant of the fort quickly squelched the attempt, however.⁶⁰ Although the Indians continued to resent the invasion of their country, they did carry on some trade with the factory.

Congress had established the Indian factory system in 1795 in order to provide the Indians with goods at actual cost. The government thus hoped to check the unfair practices of American traders who charged unreasonably high prices for their goods. In return, the government hoped to gain the friendship of the Indians and thereby reduce the cost of keeping troops on the frontier.⁶¹

The Fort Madison factory stocked tea, flour, spices (used for otter and beaver bait), salt, coffee, tobacco, pipes, traps, guns, powder, agricultural tools, blankets, and jewelry.⁶²

Congress prohibited the trader from selling his stock to the Indians in exchange for guns, hunting articles, agricultural instruments, cooking utensils or clothing.⁶³ In spite of the lower cost of the merchandise sold by the Fort Madison factory, the government soon found it could not compete with the private traders who offered their goods on credit.⁶⁴ Thus, the factory failed to achieve the purpose hoped for by the government.

In the years following 1808, the Shawnee leader, Tecumseh, and his brother, the Prophet, were stirring up the Indians in an attempt to gain enough warriors to fight the white man. The Sac and Fox Indians provided fertile ground for recruitment, and a number of them promised to join forces with the Shawnee. But when the Prophet and Tecumseh led their warriors against William Henry Harrison at Tippecanoe Creek in 1811, the Sac and Fox conspicuously failed to appear.⁶⁵

Meanwhile rumors of the eminent war between the British and the Americans reached the Sac and Fox. The Mesquakie had determined to live in peace with the white man and wished only to remain neutral should conflict occur. The Sauk, however, favored the British. The British agent, Colonel Dixon, held talks with the Sauk leaders and gave presents to the different bands. In his autobiography, the Sauk war chief, Black Hawk, recalled the events of this time and wrote

that:

I had not made up my mind whether to join the British or remain neutral. I had not discovered one good trait in the character of the Americans that had come to the country. They made fair promises, but never fulfilled them! Whilst the British made but few - but we could always rely upon their word.⁶⁶

A few bands of Sauk and a small group of Mesquakie did join Black Hawk in helping the British attack both Fort Meigs on the Maumee River in Ohio, and Detroit.⁶⁷ After the end of the war, the United States forced the Mesquakie to sign a treaty in spite of the fact that the great majority of the Mesquakie had remained neutral during the conflict. The Mesquakie chiefs signed the treaty at Portage des Sioux in 1815. The treaty avowed to establish perpetual peace and friendship between the Mesquakie and the United States, and the Mesquakie assented to recognize, reestablish, and confirm the Treaty of St. Louis.⁶⁸

Black Hawk and the other recalcitrant Sauk signed a similar treaty in 1816. Referring to this treaty in his autobiography, Black Hawk wrote that he did not know what he was signing, and laid the blame on the white man for mistreating the Indians and keeping them in ignorance of the issues involved in the treaty. He wrote:

We can only judge what is proper and right by our standards of right and wrong, which differs widely from the whites, if I have been correctly informed. The whites may do bad all their lives, and then if they are sorry for it when about to die, all is well! But with us it is different: we must continue throughout our

lives to do what we conceive to be good. If we have corn and meat, and know of a family that have none, we divide with them. If we have more blankets than sufficient, and others have not enough, we must give to them that want.⁶⁹

The Secretary of War appointed Thomas Forsyth to the post of Sac and Fox Indian agent in 1816. When Forsyth delivered the annual annuities to the Mesquakie in the summer of 1818, he told them that the annuities paid for the lands ceded to the government in 1804. When the Mesquakie heard this they were astonished and denied ever selling the land. They further stated that because the government had paid the annuities in the form of goods, the Mesquakie supposed the payments were simply presents offered by the government to insure the friendship of the Indians.⁷⁰ The Mesquakie then refused their annuities declaring they would do without food and live on roots rather than part with their lands. However, they later took the annuities after Forsyth had left for the Sauk village of Saukenauk.⁷¹

The fact that the Mesquakie accepted the annuities indicated that by 1818 they already depended upon these annuities for part of their livelihood. Although the habits of the Mesquakie had changed little during the years since 1804, the emphasis they placed on the occupations of agriculture and hunting had changed dramatically. In the years after 1804, the Sac and Fox became increasingly dependent upon hunting as the principal means by which they could purchase the merchandise offered by the traders. In 1805, the Sac and

Fox brought approximately 1,000 deer, bear, raccoon, otter, and beaver pelts to the traders.⁷² By 1819, the number of pelts brought to the traders had increased to 60,082.⁷³ On the other hand, the number of acres cultivated by the Sac and Fox decreased from 800 acres in 1804 to only 300 acres in 1819.⁷⁴ As the Indians turned more and more to hunting as their prime activity, they required more, not less land on which to hunt. Only by maintaining their thousands of acres of land could they provide themselves with the necessary meat, furs, guns, gunpowder, traps, yard goods, blankets, and colored glass beads they desired.⁷⁵ Around 1820 many of the old Indians told Thomas Forsyth that they were happier before they began to use firearms, because then they had to kill only what they needed for food. Since that time, however, they had to destroy all the game in order to purchase merchandise from the traders.⁷⁶

All the traders gave credit to the Indians and an Indian often bought even the poorest merchandise if he could obtain it on credit.⁷⁷ Goods cost more on credit, of course, and traders received a markup of 25 to 50 per cent on credit goods while charging a markup price of only 12 to 25 per cent on cash goods. Furthermore, the traders often gave the Indians 25 to 50 per cent less for their furs than they could obtain in St. Louis.⁷⁸

The Sac and Fox became quite dependent upon these traders for the necessities of life. In 1824, the principal chiefs

frequently visited Forsyth, the Indian agent, and complained because the government did not allow the traders to go into the interior of Sac and Fox country. The Indians said that because of the scarcity of game, they had to travel 200 to 300 miles for a little gunpowder and other articles. They complained of this imposition, especially since it took them from the field during February and March when they ought to be hunting bear, beaver, and otter. Furthermore, they argued that they did not have enough horses to carry all their baggage and families into the country they wanted to hunt.⁷⁹

Each year the game became more scarce due to the increased hunting activity of the Indians and also because of the nearness of white settlements. These settlements increased in number and continually pressed closer to Indian country. The whiteman's thirst after land disturbed the Sac and Fox and the agent and traders heard the Indians say that:

. . . they compare a white settlement in their neighborhood to a drop of raccoon's grease falling on a blanket. The drop at first is hardly perceptible but in time covers the whole blanket.⁸⁰

The constant pressure from white settlements drove the Sac and Fox further and further west where they came into frequent contact with the Sioux Indians. Prior to the War of 1812, the Sac and Fox had fought most of their skirmishes against the Osage Indians. After the war, the increased contact between the Sac and Fox and the Sioux caused friction between these two groups over hunting ground rights. As a

result, Indian skirmishes occurred every summer, and ended each year with treaties of peace, which the tribes regularly broke the following summer. The Sac and Fox - Sioux skirmishes continued until the United States Government finally removed the Sac and Fox to Kansas.⁸¹

Meanwhile, the westward expansion of white settlers brought with it miners and traders who cast anxious eyes on the lead mines at Dubuque. After 1822, these men continually pressured the Mesquakie to give up their Dubuque mines. In 1822, agent Forsyth told the Mesquakie that they should move to the west side of the Mississippi River because the government had leased the Dubuque mines on the Illinois side to some white miners. The Mesquakie protested that they still owned the land, but Forsyth told them the government had purchased the land from the Chippewa and Pottawatomie. By threatening to withhold the annuities from the Mesquakie, Forsyth forced them to permit the miners to mine the Fever River mines.⁸²

In the years from 1822 to 1824, a number of white settlers settled on the land in Missouri that lay just north of the Missouri and Illinois Rivers. When the Sac and Fox protested, the government argued that they had bought the land from the Osage. The Sac and Fox claimed that the land belonged to them by conquest. Further attempts at negotiation failed until the summer of 1824. In June of that year, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun invited representatives of the Sac and Fox, Sioux, and four other tribes to Washington to arrange a peace

between the warring groups. The peace talks proved to be a failure, but Keokuk, a Sauk chief, took advantage of the opportunity to discuss the land question. Keokuk had risen in importance after the War of 1812 because of his great speaking ability rather than his skill on the battlefield. In Washington he argued that the Osage had no right to sell the area of land in dispute. In order to settle the question once and for all, Secretary of War Calhoun agreed to a new treaty.⁸³ Under the terms of the 1824 treaty, the Sac and Fox agreed to give up their claim to land in dispute in Missouri. The government promised to pay \$1,000 in cash or merchandise to the Sac and Fox, and an annuity of \$500 for the Sauk and \$500 for the Mesquakie for a period of ten years. In addition, the government promised to give the Indians a blacksmith, farming utensils, cattle, and to employ a person to aid the Indians in agriculture at the discretion of the President.⁸⁴

Sac and Fox occupation of eastern Illinois quickly drew to a close after 1824, however, as white settlers in Illinois began to press for the removal of the Indians. When the people of Illinois elected Ninian Edwards to the governorship in 1826, he promised to rid the state of all red men. Squatters quickly moved onto Indian land and this premature move led to a number of incidents between whites and Indians. Edwards tried to get help from Washington, D. C., but met with little success until Andrew Jackson came to office. When an aide reminded the President that the Sac and Fox had aided

the British in the War of 1812, Jackson vowed that: "By the eternal, every last one of them shall cross the Mississippi or be killed."⁸⁵ Congress delayed the order for removal until 1830, but in order to speed the Indians along, the Jackson administration placed the lands on sale in Springfield, Illinois, in 1829.⁸⁶

The continual infringement of whites on Indian land forced the Sac and Fox into further conflict with the Sioux and their skirmishes became so frequent during the winter of 1829-1830, that frontiersmen feared the hostilities might erupt into a general Indian war. After considerable delay and misunderstanding, United States agents arranged a meeting of the Indian tribes at Prairie du Chien. On July 16, 1830, the Sauk, Mesquakie, Sioux, Minominee, Winnebago, Omaha, Iowa, and Oto Indians signed a treaty surrendering considerable areas of land between the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.⁸⁷

According to the treaty, the Sac and Fox ceded a twenty mile strip south of an imaginary line running westward from the mouth of the Upper Iowa River to the Des Moines River. The Sioux ceded a similar strip north of that line. The government called this area the Neutral Strip. In the same treaty, the Sac and Fox gave up that portion of their territory lying west of the watershed dividing the Missouri and Des Moines Rivers.⁸⁸ The Indians granted this vast tract of land with the understanding that the government would use it only for Indian purposes. Any of the Indians involved in the treaty

could hunt on the land, or the United States could settle such Indian tribes on the land as the President saw fit. In accordance with this agreement, the government removed the Winnebago to that portion of neutral ground east of the Cedar River, and gave the Pottawatomie 5,000,000 acres in the southwestern part of Iowa.⁸⁹ For the land sold by the Indians the United States paid the Sac and Fox \$370,007 which included \$5,132 in presents, \$3,000 in annuities for ten years, and six blacksmiths for ten years at a total cost of \$30,000.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, John Reynolds had been elected to succeed Ninian Edwards as governor of Illinois. Reynolds decided to call out the state militia to forcibly remove Black Hawk's band of Sauk from the Indian village of Saukenauk. This band had returned to Saukenauk during the spring of 1830 where they lived side by side with the white squatters. In order to escape the pursuing militiamen, Black Hawk recrossed the Mississippi River to the Iowa side where he later agreed to sign a peace called the Article of Agreement and Capitulation. After signing this treaty on June 30, 1831, Black Hawk said that he was determined to live in peace.⁹¹

CHAPTER V

THE BLACK HAWK WAR

The withdrawal of Black Hawk's band to Iowa appeared to preclude any further Indian resistance to white settlement of western Illinois. Black Hawk and many of the Sauk, however, still hoped to return to Saukenauk. Their hopes seemed futile until a friend who had recently returned from Canada told Black Hawk that the British would assist him against the Americans. This Indian also told Black Hawk that the British planned to send guns, ammunition, provisions and clothing to the Sauk in the spring. Furthermore, the friend indicated that Black Hawk would have the support of the Winnebago, Ottawa, Chippewa, and Pottowatomie in any military action against the Americans.⁹² With this apparent promise of British and Indian support, Black Hawk again crossed the Mississippi River into Illinois on April 3, 1832. He had with him, approximately 2,000 Sauk men, women, and children who wished to return to their old home. The British, of course, were in no position to give aid to Black Hawk, and had not offered to help him. Black Hawk soon realized his mistake as the Illinois militia, and eventually the United States Army went into action in an attempt to stop him. Black Hawk and his faithful band spent the next four months in a nightmarish attempt to evade their pursuers and return to Iowa. The starving, footweary, bedraggled remnant of Black Hawk's band finally met its end

at the Battle of Bad Axe on July 28, 1832, as the militia and army massacred practically all of the women and children as well as the warriors as they tried to swim across the Mississippi River into Iowa.⁹³ Black Hawk escaped temporarily but was later captured by a band of Winnebago. Shortly after the Winnebago brought Black Hawk to the authorities, the tired warrior made the following speech which summed up the feeling of the Indians toward the white man:

You have taken me prisoner, with all my warriors. I am much grieved; for I expected, if I did not defeat you, to hold out much longer, and give you more trouble before I surrendered. I tried hard to bring you into ambush, but your last general [Atkinson] understood Indian fighting. I determined to rush upon you, and fight you face to face. I fought hard, but your guns were well aimed. The bullets flew like birds in the air, and whizzed by our ears like the wind through the trees in winter.

My warriors fell around me; it began to look dismal. I saw my evil day at hand. The sun rose dim on us in the morning, and at night it sank in a dark cloud, and looked like a ball of fire. That was the last sun that shone on Black Hawk. His heart is dead, and no longer beats quick in his bosom. He is now a prisoner to the white men; they will do with him as they wish. But he can stand torture, and is not afraid of death. He is no coward. Black Hawk is an Indian!

He has done nothing for which an Indian ought to be ashamed. He has fought for his countrymen, against the white men who came, year after year, to cheat them and take away their lands. You know the cause of our making war. It is known to all white men. They ought to be ashamed of it. The white men despise the Indians and drive them from their homes. But the Indians are not deceitful. The white men speak bad of the Indian and look at him spitefully. But the Indian does not tell lies. Indians do not steal. An Indian who is as bad as a white man could not live in our nation.

He would be put to death and eaten by the wolves.

The white men are bad schoolmasters. They carry false looks and deal in false actions. They smile in the face of the poor Indians, to cheat him; they shake him by the hand to gain his confidence, to make him drunk and to deceive him. We told them to let us alone, and keep away from us; but they followed on, and beset our paths, and they coiled themselves among us, like the snake. They poisoned us like them, hypocrites and liars; all talkers and no workers.

We looked up to the Great Spirit. We went to our Father. We were encouraged. His great council gave us fair words and big promises; but we obtained no satisfaction. Things were growing worse. There were no deer in the forest. The opossum and the beaver were fled. The springs were drying up, and our people were without food to keep them from starving. We called a great council and built a big fire. The spirit of our fathers arose and spoke to us to avenge our wrongs or die. We set up the war whoop and dug up the tomahawk; our knives were ready, and the heart of Black Hawk sailed high in his bosom when he led his warriors to battle. He is satisfied. He will go to the world of spirits contented. He has done his duty. His father will meet him there and commend him. Black Hawk is a true Indian. He feels for his wife, his children, his friends, but he does not care for himself. He cares for the nation and for the Indians. They will suffer. He laments their fate.

The white men do not scalp the head, they do worse--they poison the heart. It is not pure with them. His countrymen will not be scalped, but will in a few years be like the white men, so you cannot trust them; and there must be in the white settlements as many officers as men, to take care of them and keep them in order.

Farewell, my nation! Black Hawk tried to save you, and avenge your wrongs. He drank the blood of some of the whites. He has been taken prisoner, and his plans are stopped. He is near his end. His sun is setting, and he will rise no more. Farewell to Black Hawk!⁹⁴

After the Black Hawk War, the United States forced the

Sac and Fox to sign a peace treaty ceding more land to the government. The United States claimed this land as retribution for the trouble and expense the Indians had caused the government in the war. Half of the ceded land, however, belonged to the Mesquakie who had played no part in the war. Nevertheless, the United States forced the Mesquakie to sign the treaty also.⁹⁵

The ceded land, called the Black Hawk Purchase, gave the United States a strip of land about fifty miles in width extending along the Mississippi River from the Neutral Strip to the Missouri line. This included all the land in the eastern half of Iowa with the exception of Keokuk's Reserve and a small section of land at the very southwest corner of Iowa reserved for the half-breeds of the Sac and Fox.⁹⁶ The United States permitted Keokuk to keep the land contained in Keokuk's Reserve because the Sauk leader had been instrumental in keeping many of the Sauk bands at peace during the war. The ceded land ran the length of the Mississippi River in Iowa and contained about 6,000,000 acres of land. The treaty required the Indians to leave the ceded territory before June 1, 1833, and never again "reside, plant, fish, or hunt on any portion of the land."⁹⁷ The United States paid the Sac and Fox \$655,000 which included a \$40,000 cash payment to the traders to pay for the accumulated debts of the Indians, and an annuity of \$20,000 for a period of thirty years. The payment also included the salary for one blacksmith for thirty

years. In addition to this sum, the United States promised to provide the Sac and Fox with 40 kegs of tobacco and 40 pounds of salt each year for thirty years. The government also gave a present of 35 beef cattle, 12 bushels of salt, 30 barrels of pork, 60 barrels of flour, and 6,000 bushels of Indian corn to the relatives of the Sauk warriors killed in the war. Not including the latter articles, the price came to about 14 cents per acre.⁹⁸

CHAPTER VI

A FALTERING NATION

The Treaty of 1832 brought the end of an era for the proud, roving Sac and Fox Indians of Illinois and Iowa. During the period from 1804 to 1833, the federal government had to plan for the very real possibility of war with the Sac and Fox. The defeat of Black Hawk's band in 1832 crushed the Indians, who then realized they could never successfully battle the white man. From that point on, the government adopted an increasingly condescending tone of paternalism toward the Sac and Fox.

After the war, the government divested Black Hawk of all his power. This action left a leadership gap that Keokuk quickly filled. The United States supported Keokuk because he favored the white man and thus could be controlled more easily than the other chiefs. Keokuk's ascendancy to the chieftainship of the Sac and Fox caused a great deal of dissatisfaction among a number of Sauk and Mesquakie bands in the years following 1832.⁹⁹ This dissatisfaction led to pro-Keokuk and anti-Keokuk factions that split members of both tribes. This split led to a dispute over the payment of annuities to the tribes. Keokuk insisted the government pay the annuities to the chiefs. In this way Keokuk held considerable economic power over the two tribes. Many of the Sauk and Mesquakie thought the system completely unfair. In May of 1836, the

dissatisfied Indians almost supplanted the Sauk chief with another Sauk, Hardfish, who held the hereditary right to Keokuk's post. The Indian agent, Joseph M. Street (appointed in 1834) backed Keokuk who retained his position. By supporting Keokuk, the government quieted opposition temporarily, but the action did not end the dispute, and ill feeling continued for a number of years.¹⁰⁰

Under the terms of the Treaty of 1832, Keokuk had retained 400 square miles of land within the Black Hawk Purchase. In 1836, Keokuk proposed that the government buy this land, and the United States agreed. The United States paid the Sac and Fox \$198,588.87 for the 256,000 acres in Keokuk's Reserve. This amount included \$30,000 in cash, a payment of \$48,458.87 to traders for Indian debts, a \$10,000 annuity for ten years, and 200 horses valued at \$9,341. The government used the remaining funds to care for Sac and Fox half-breed children.¹⁰¹

The Treaty of 1836 vividly pointed out the extent to which the Sac and Fox had become dependent upon the government and traders for their existence. In 1804, these Indians had harvested more than enough to feed themselves and managed to sell their surplus to the white men. The furs that they acquired during the hunting season they sold to the traders in exchange for merchandise such as traps, ammunition, guns, and trinkets. But in the years after the Black Hawk War, the Sac and Fox became increasingly dependent upon the traders for their food also.¹⁰² In 1804, the two bands of Sac and Fox

living at Rock Island had cultivated over 800 acres of land. By 1837, the entire tribe of Sac and Fox cultivated only 450 acres of land.¹⁰³ What had happened to the proud and once self-reliant Sac and Fox Indians? What had reduced them to dependence upon the traders and the government in such a short span of time?

The Indians' reduced reliance upon agriculture for their major food supply came about primarily because of a white man's invention--the gun. The gun promised the Indians an easier life, but its use proved to be a "Pandora's Box." The use of a gun made hunting much easier for Sac and Fox braves because they could easily kill more than enough game to meet the needs of their families. But a gun required ammunition and often needed fixing or replacing. Thus the Indian braves sold their surplus furs and pelts to the traders in exchange for guns and ammunition.¹⁰⁴ Before long, the Indians had destroyed all the game in their immediate vicinity and found it necessary to travel many miles away to find good hunting grounds. The Sac and Fox reached this stage by 1824.¹⁰⁵ The Sac and Fox braves no longer considered hunting easy when they had to travel 200 to 400 miles to find game. Unfortunately they had no choice. The increased emphasis on hunting had decreased their reliance on agriculture, and by 1819, they barely harvested enough food for their own needs.¹⁰⁶ By 1824, the Sac and Fox had reached the point of no return. They could not go back to their old ways. The Sac and Fox were primarily meat eaters, and the

game had departed long before.¹⁰⁷

After the Black Hawk War, the condition of the Sac and Fox rapidly deteriorated as the Indians became increasingly apathetic about their future. As more and more settlers poured into the Black Hawk Purchase, the Sac and Fox became less inclined to plant crops. They feared the government would allow the settlers to take over the Indian corn fields as had happened in Saukenauk between 1830 and 1832. Some Indians refused to plant crops at all. Thus a number of the Sac and Fox braves wandered aimlessly, or camped near the white settlement, content to live off their annuities and the credit of the traders. Other braves spent their time warring against the Sioux.¹⁰⁸

As the number of skirmishes between the Sac and Fox and Sioux increased, the government made greater attempts to arrange a peace between the warring groups. In 1837, the Secretary of War, J. F. Poinsett, invited the Sac and Fox and the Sioux to Washington to arrange a peace. The peace talks failed, but the government persuaded the Sac and Fox to sign a new treaty. According to the 1837 treaty, the Sac and Fox agreed to sell the government 250,000 acres of land west of the Black Hawk Purchase for \$377,000. The United States paid \$100,000 of this money to traders to pay for the debts of the Indians, and the government also gave the Sac and Fox \$4,500 in presents. The treaty called for \$200,000 of this money to be put in trust for the Indians with the promise to

be so glad when I am gone that you will soon forget that the meat and the lodge-fire of the Indian have been forever free to the white stranger and at all times he has asked for

what he has fought for, the right to be free.¹¹¹

After the Treaty of 1837, the settlers poured onto the government lands and often flowed over into Indian territory. Thus by 1838, white men traveled in and out of Indian country continually. Furthermore, traders and other white men dispensed considerable amounts of liquor to the Indians, especially to the chiefs and head men in order to curry favor with them. Later these white men claimed large debts owed them by the Indians. In 1838, agent Street reported that at least one hundred white men attended the fall payment of annuities at the Indian Agency council house. These men so crowded around the council house to watch the payment that they excluded the Indians from the house entirely. When Street ordered the whites outside, they removed all the chinking from the logs in order to peek in and watch the proceedings. After the federal payment, the Indians paid these small traders over \$12,000 in specie for past debts.¹¹²

Agent Street died in May of 1840, and the government replaced him with his son-in-law, John Beach. Beach recommended in his report for 1840 that the government permit only one trader per tribe to travel on Indian land with his prices determined by the agent. Beach believed that only in this way could he stop the unjust practices toward the Indians. He reported that the Indians would buy anything as long as they could get it on credit. These articles included such items as calico cloth at eight dollars per yard, calf-skin

boots, side saddles, shoes, and shawls. And then before the Indian reached home with his newly acquired goods, he would meet a whiskey trader who would take the merchandise at a fraction of its original cost in return for whiskey. Beach reported that one store in the vicinity had obtained all its stock of variously assorted items in just this way.¹¹³

After the Treaty of 1837, the government attempted to renew the Indians' interest in farming but met with little success. In 1839, the United States sent some white men to a point on the Iowa River twenty miles west of Iowa City where they selected and broke up 640 acres of land. The men fenced in the land with good substantial rail fence. The Mesquakie did not want this farm, however, and they raised no protest when impatient white settlers burned down a portion of the fence and destroyed the crops.¹¹⁴ Later the government established a farm on the Des Moines River, and by 1842, the government farm produced 1,300 bushels of corn. The Sac and Fox could see no point in farming land that the whites would soon take from them anyway; so the white men had to do all the work on the farm. Agent Beach reported that under the circumstances, the Indians could not be expected to use any methods other than those they already knew. He also stated that not only did the Indian men refuse to work on the farms, but that they also tore down the fences and turned their ponies into the fields to feed on the wheat stacks.¹¹⁵

In October of 1841, the federal agents suggested the

Indians sell their land in Iowa and remove to Minnesota. The Sac and Fox rejected this plan because it would place them too close to their enemy, the Sioux. Thus the Sac and Fox chiefs unanimously rejected the government's offer to buy their land for \$1,000,000. The Mesquakie chief, Wapello, delivered a most moving rejection speech to the commissioners:

You said you were sent by our great father to treat with us and buy our land. We have had a council, and are of one opinion. . . . It is impossible for us to subsist where you wish us to go. We own this country by occupancy and inheritance. It is the only good country, and the only one suitable for us to live in on this side of the Mississippi River; and you must not think hard of us because we do not wish to sell it. We were once a powerful, but now a small nation. When the white people crossed the big water and landed on this island, they were then small as we now are. I remember when Wisconsin was ours; and now it has our name; we sold it to you. Dubuque was once ours; we sold it to you. And they are occupied by white men who live happily. Rock Island was the only place where we lived happily; and we sold that to you. This is all the country we have left; and we are so few now we cannot conquer other countries. You now see me and all my people. Have pity on us; we are but few, and are fast melting away. If other Indians had been treated as we have been, there would be none left. This land is all we have; it is our only fortune. When it is gone, we shall have nothing left. The Great Spirit has been unkind to us, in not giving us the knowledge of the white men, for we would then be on an equal footing; but we hope he will take pity on us.¹¹⁶

Finally in February of 1842, the government induced the Sac and Fox to sell one-half of their holdings with the qualification that eventually they would be removed to a location south of the Missouri River. As rumors of the proposed treaty

circulated, squatters settled on the land. When agent Beach had them forcibly evicted, they burned the mills that the government had built for the Indians.¹¹⁷

In October of 1842, the Indians gathered at the agency under the pressure of white settlers to negotiate the treaty with John Chambers, Governor of Iowa Territory. All of the Mesquakie and some of the Sauk were reluctant to sell. But after the commissioners distributed several gifts to the chiefs and head men, Keokuk overcame the resistance of the Mesquakie who finally agreed to sell.¹¹⁸

By the terms of the treaty, the government purchased all the Indian land east of the Missouri River for \$1,058,566, or about 10 cents per acre. The government paid \$258,566 of this amount to traders and placed the remaining \$800,000 in trust at 5 per cent interest which the United States paid to the Sac and Fox as an annual annuity. The Sac and Fox agreed to evacuate the eastern half of the cession by May of 1843 and the western half in three years. The United States promised to remove the Indians at that time to a tract of land on the Missouri River or one of its tributaries.¹¹⁹

The winter of 1842-1843 proved unusually severe and caused great hardship for the Sac and Fox. A number of their ponies died from lack of food. Yet at the appointed time, both tribes moved into the western half of Iowa. The process of moving proved a considerable hardship for them, for it forced them to defer their agricultural operations until late

in the spring. By the early part of the summer, the shortage of food and clothing became so serious that the Indian agent, John Beach, had to purchase provisions and other supplies to relieve their almost destitute condition.¹²⁰ Then for three miserable years, the Sac and Fox lingered on in western Iowa. During the winter of 1842-1843, Poweshiek's band of Mesquakie, who disliked the Treaty of 1842, returned to their old villages on the Iowa River. The cavalry evicted them, but the Mesquakie returned the following winter. The white settlers did not really object to the temporary presence of the Indians, however, because this offered a chance to exchange whiskey for whatever valuables the poor Indians still possessed.¹²¹ During these last years, the Sac and Fox suffered greatly from the acts of the nearby white settlers. As the time for removal drew closer, hundreds of vagabond settlers squatted along the border ready to pounce on the Indians' land. A number of white men crossed over the border onto Indian land, plied the braves with liquor and staked out land claims. When forcibly removed by a detachment of troops, the angry whites retaliated by killing a number of Sac and Fox Indians.¹²² In his report for 1845, agent Beach reported that:

It is not a subject of astonishment that the education, the civilization, and especially the glorious religion of the white man, are held by them in so little estimation. Our education appears to consist in knowing how most effectively to cheat them; our civilization in knowing how to pander to the worst propensities of nature, and then beholding the criminal and inhuman results with a cold indifference--a worse than heathen

apathy; while our religion is readily summed up in the consideration of dollars and cents.¹²³

As the time drew near for the termination of the treaty and the removal south of the Missouri, the tribes grew increasingly reluctant to leave the land of their ancestors. Both tribes expressed dissatisfaction with the possible locations in Kansas suggested by the government, and even Keokuk refused to accept the first tract of land assigned. The Mesquakie generally remained uncooperative and refused to attend the council meetings to discuss removal plans. Consequently, when removal did get under way in the fall of 1845, the precise location of their new home had not yet been decided. For a while the government feared that many of the Sac and Fox would not leave unless removed by force.¹²⁴

Finally, however, on September 10, 1845, Keokuk led the way out of Iowa, and a few days later, Hardfish followed with his band. By October 11, all the Sauks had left Iowa except for one small band which was too ill to make the trip.¹²⁵ By the first of the year, all the Sauk and one-fifth of the Mesquakie had gathered on the Kansas River to await the rest of the group so they could select their new lands. However, the band of Mesquakie who remained behind stopped off with the Pottawatomie and stayed for a considerable time. Finally, when the planting of corn in Kansas could no longer be postponed, those present in Kansas received permission from the government to choose the site for their new home.¹²⁶

The Sac and Fox tenure in Iowa had come to an end, and their removal from Iowa signaled the end of another era for the tribes. Even more than the Black Hawk War of 1832, the removal demonstrated their rapid decline.¹²⁷

CHAPTER VII

KANSAS: THE YEARS OF DESPAIR, 1846 TO 1856

The area in Kansas that the Sac and Fox occupied for the next twenty-three years differed radically from their ancestral home in Iowa. Located on the headwaters of the Osage River, the reservation consisted of 435,200 acres, mostly prairie intersected by a few good timbered streams.¹²⁸ John Beach described the region as having a very agreeable climate, but that in other respects, it contained very little timber, possessed few springs, and reportedly had unhealthful streams. The rock stratum of the reservation made well digging difficult, and the sandy soil did not suit the Indian's primitive methods of agriculture. Also, the reservation lay on the poorest land of the large reservation shared with the Ottawa, Chippewa, and Kansas Indians.¹²⁹

The first few years in Kansas went well for the immigrants. During these years, the Indians built several villages, and the government erected the agency buildings. Many of the more progressive Indians even expressed the desire to have farms, and some asked for the services of a white doctor. The buffalo that had been plentiful the first year moved further west each succeeding year, but the Sac and Fox braves still hunted without difficulty. But before long, the Sac and Fox found themselves in a position similar to the one they had faced in Iowa after the Black Hawk War. While the game remained

plentiful, the Sac and Fox found hunting easier than farming. But when the game became scarce, they spent more and more time hunting and less time planting crops. Thus the Sac and Fox became increasingly dependent upon their annuities, and by 1850 were well on their way to becoming reservation Indians.¹³⁰

Beginning in 1850, the economic, health, and moral condition of the Indians went steadily downhill. In the summer of 1850, an unprecedented drought ruined the crops, and the Sac and Fox found themselves practically destitute. Furthermore, as the game grew scarce, the hunting parties traveled further to the southwest where they frequently ran into hostile Indians or a detachment of troops chasing Indians.¹³¹

In May, 1851, a Missouri Sauk recently exposed to smallpox visited a village in Sac and Fox country. He broke out with smallpox a few days after his arrival, and the disease spread rapidly throughout the reservation. The Indians became so alarmed that they requested a physician who succeeded in inoculating a number of the Sauk. Consequently, the Sauk survived the epidemic rather well. The Mesquakie refused inoculation, however, and thus suffered greatly from the disease. In addition to the smallpox, many succumbed to an epidemic of flu apparently caused by eating green corn. In all, about three hundred Indians (mostly Mesquakie) died from various causes during the winter of 1851-1852.¹³²

Much of the sickness reportedly stemmed from excessive

use of liquor which became even more prevalent than in Iowa. With hunting and fishing no longer absorbing their energies, and their customs and traditions preventing the braves from working in the fields, the warriors found they had little to do but wander around the white camps. Unscrupulous settlers found the Indians easy prey, and traded whiskey to them in exchange for the Indians' possessions. The braves became content to do little else but drink and reminisce about the wonderful days in Iowa.¹³³

In spite of the sense of degradation associated with men working at agricultural pursuits, a number of the more progressive Indians desired to abandon their Indian villages, and have small fields made for them. They hoped to cultivate the earth like the white man. They saw the game disappearing from Kansas just as they had once seen it disappear from Iowa. These few Indians realized they would have to return to agriculture in order to survive. However, the chiefs distributed the land and often gave special privileges to those in their favor. Furthermore, the chiefs feared they would lose their influence over their people if every family could have a separate field and the villages disappeared. The more conservative Mesquakie wanted the land held in common by the tribe. They feared that if the government divided the land into individual plots, the Indians might eventually lose the land entirely.¹³⁴

In these years after 1850, the Mesquakie had become

increasingly fearful about their future as a tribe. The promised land in Kansas had proved to be practically devoid of water and trees. The game had fled. Each year the chiefs saw greater numbers of their people dying from hunger, disease, liquor, or just simply lack of interest in living. Each year the chiefs watched the government attempt to force the Indians to accept the white man's agricultural methods, houses, schools, and religion. The chiefs and the old people became fearful lest their children and grandchildren adopt the new ways and forget how to be good Indians. The Mesquakie knew they were dying and longed to return to the home of their ancestors in Iowa. They remembered only the good times they had spent in Iowa before 1845. They remembered the numerous streams, the well-timbered lands, the good hunting, and the wonderful feasts. Thus when the government began to pressure the Sac and Fox to agree to allotments of their land to individuals in 1852, a small band of Mesquakie returned to Iowa where they lived near their old haunts on the Iowa River.¹³⁵

CHAPTER VIII

GOING HOME

The Mesquakie who returned to Iowa in 1852, in addition to the few that had never left Iowa, were residing in the state illegally according to the terms of the Treaty of 1842. The Mesquakie realized, however, that in order to settle permanently in Iowa, they would somehow have to circumvent the treaty. Consequently, they began an all out negotiation with the State of Iowa to permit the legal return of all Mesquakie to their beloved homeland. Many sympathetic settlers came to the aid of the Indians and circulated a number of petitions requesting that the entire tribe be allowed to return to Iowa. (The thought of benefiting from tribal annuities may have played a part in bringing about this reaction.) One of the petitions, dated March 23, 1852, and signed by a resident of Marion, Iowa, stated:

We Take pleasure in Saying to the Public
that those Indians, has been in this country for
Some time and we can Recommend them as good Sivil
Indians, and the Majority of the citizens of this
county have no objection to there Remaining in
this county & are willing to assist them all they
can. 136

The Mesquakie cause created a great emotional appeal among the white settlers who circulated another petition containing the signatures of 128 persons. The names of the Secretary of State of Iowa, George W. McCleary, and his deputy, John M. Davis, were among the signatures.

The undersigned Your petitioners respectfully represent that they are Citizens of the . . . (illegible) . . . the lands formerly held and owned by that tribe of Indians called the Musquaque, Composed of the Sacs and Fox tribe that, Many of the Indians since they were removed by the government have returned to their old hunting grounds among us, that they all unite in representing that the Country to which they have been removed by this government is to them unhealthy, that they are fast wasting away that their Children die off rapidly, that they have not sufficient force to sustain the members against their More powerful neighbors by which they are surrounded.

And they represent also that they are disposed to turn their attention to Aggriculture. and are particularly anxious to be allowed a grant of land sufficient for that purpose. Some where on the waters of the Red Cedar in Iowa, And You Memorialist Sympathising with their Condition respectfully Ask that they May be gratified in this behalf.

And that the government extend to them all the favour which their necisities demand, And particularly that they be allowed to have on some terms, a residence within the limits of the State of Iowa, on the Unsold lands of the U.S. and that the favourable considerations of their necisities May be had at an early day. While the same will yet be available to them. As in duty bound they will ever prey.¹³⁷

In spite of the large support the settlers gave the Mesquakie, the United States Government refused to allot any land in Iowa for use by Indians who belonged in Kansas. Thus for all practical purposes, the Mesquakie dream was but a voiceless cry to a deaf "Great Spirit." Yet final as the government refusal may have seemed, the Mesquakie did not give up.

By tradition, the Mesquakie had always resisted the white man's ways. They would however, accept and adopt those ways advantageous in preserving their own way of life. And in their desperate situation in the middle 1850's, when the

return to Iowa seemed the only hope for retaining their identity, the Mesquakie had little choice but to find and accept a white man's way in order to realize their dream.

Somehow (probably from sympathetic white settlers) they learned that they could buy land in Iowa and acquire title to it. Then the land would be theirs and no one could take it from them until they decided to sell it. Accordingly, one band in Kansas collected \$735 for the purpose of buying land. The chief of the band, Ma me nwa ne ke, held council and sent his brother, Pa ta co to, and four other councilmen to Iowa to make the purchase.

Jubilant and anxious, the delegation of Indians left for Iowa without any real plan of action, without any idea of the process required in buying land. What is more, not one of the Indians could speak English. Consequently, upon arriving in Iowa, the delegates were unable for a time to carry out their objective. Fortunately, however, the Mesquakie met a Chippewa-Ottawa Indian, Qua ti bi ta la, who could speak English and who agreed to act as an interpreter.

Through this interpreter, the Mesquakie councilmen told some white settlers of Chief Ma me nwa ne ke's plan. These white men in turn contacted three farmers, Phillip, David, and Isaac Butler who agreed to sell the Indians eighty acres of land. The farmers, however, wanted \$1,000 for the land. The determined Mesquakie delegation set out to find the other Mesquakie Indians who had remained in Iowa. Again and again

they reiterated their chief's plan and the urgency of their need for money. The Iowa Mesquakie could raise only \$15 in cash but they offered to give up some of their ponies to make up the \$250 difference.

In the meantime, the sympathizing white settlers continued to use their influence on the Iowa legislators. On July 15, 1856, the Iowa Assembly passed an act permitting the tribe to reside in Iowa. There was one legal snag, however. The Mesquakie were not citizens of the United States; therefore, they could not own land. Knowing this, those settlers favorable to the Mesquakie's cause once again prevailed on the Governor of Iowa, James W. Grimes, to hold the newly purchased land in trust for the Indians. After much deliberation, the governor agreed to the trust, and on July 13, 1857, he signed the deed in the names of the five Mesquakie from Kansas. Thus, for \$1,000 the Mesquakie Nation acquired possession of eighty acres of land west of the present towns of Tama-Toledo, in Tama County, Iowa. The Mesquakie Nation thus became the first Indian tribe in United States' history to actually purchase their own land.

When the Iowa Assembly finally passed the act affirming the legality of Mesquakie residence in Iowa, Pa ta co to sent a party back to Kansas to inform the chief and the rest of the band that all was ready. The reservation weary Indians received the long awaited news with much excitement, and began immediately to prepare for the long trip to Iowa. They

took only those possessions that their horses could carry. Some members of the band had no horses and so took only what they could comfortably carry. The long, hot, dangerous journey proved to be a great hardship for many members of the band, but they did not mind because they were going home-- home to the land of their ancestors. The winter of 1856-1857 found eleven households of seventy-six Mesquakie established at Tama, Iowa. The Mesquakie chief, sent runners to tell the Mesquakie in other villages in Iowa to come and join the main group in their new home. The Mesquakie then settled down to survive their first winter on the settlement and the coldest winter in Iowa history.¹³⁸

In the next few years, additional malcontents from Kansas joined the Iowa band. In 1860, the principal chief of the Mesquakie, Maw mew wah ne kah, returned to Iowa with six lodges, after the Indian agent in Kansas had deposed him for opposing the allotment of land to individual Indians.¹³⁹

During the years from 1857 to 1867, the Mesquakie, happy to be free from the reservation, lived in Iowa without government help of any kind. The Indians had no money, no supervision, and no special friends to help them. In order to survive, they cultivated small patches of land here and there wherever they could get permission from white men to use the land. In the winter they divided themselves into small parties and hunted and trapped along several rivers throughout Iowa. They also made some buckskin articles and frequently

had to resort to begging as their only resource.¹⁴⁰

In 1866, the Department of Indian Affairs appointed a special agent, Leander Clark, to give help and assistance to the Mesquakie living in Iowa. The Bureau instructed agent Clark to pay the Mesquakie in Iowa \$11,000 as their share of the \$51,000 yearly annuity given to the Sac and Fox tribes according to the various treaties. Many of the Sac and Fox in Kansas objected to this payment, however, and forced the Bureau to revoke the order. Later, pressure by Iowa Congressmen induced Congress to restore the appropriation.¹⁴¹

CHAPTER IX

THE YEARS OF FREEDOM, 1867 TO 1896

When special agent Leander Clark first visited the Mesquakie settlement in the spring of 1867, he found 264 Indians living on the 120 acres just west of Tama. The land the Mesquakie owned consisted almost entirely of timber and thus provided very poor ground for planting crops. Those Indians who wanted to farm had to prevail upon the kindness of nearby white farmers to provide a half-acre or an acre of land on which the squaws could plant the Indian corn, squashes, and beans.¹⁴²

Actually the Mesquakie did not really care to use the land for farming, but preferred to leave it in its natural state. They had always lived in harmony with nature and felt safe among the trees, the river, and the hills. When the Mesquakie returned to Iowa, the land became a symbol of safety. It became a place of refuge from the white man. The symbol of land signified to the Mesquakie all that was good in their lives. Thus the close relationship of the land to the Mesquakie concept of security created in them an almost fanatic desire to increase the size of their holdings.¹⁴³ Consequently, when agent Clark made the spring annuity payment of \$5,588 to the Mesquakie in 1867, the head men of the tribe requested that he use \$2,000 of the money to purchase 99 acres of land adjacent to their property. In May of 1869, they used

\$3,500 of the annuities to buy 120 acres more. The Mesquakie wanted still more land, however, and the following June they had agent Clark purchase an additional 80 acres with \$1,600 from the spring annuity payment.¹⁴⁴ After this rash of buying, the Mesquakie found themselves quite hard pressed for money and had to temporarily abandon their quest for more land. The new land proved to be more conducive to agriculture than the original 120 acres, but the Mesquakie continued to resist any attempt on the part of the Indian agent to interest them in increasing their farming operations. The Indians did need money, however, and with the help of the new Indian agent, Lieutenant Frank D. Garretty, many of the young men managed to obtain jobs as harvest hands for nearby white farmers. During the summer of 1869, the Mesquakie managed to earn \$700 in this way.¹⁴⁵ In 1872, the Mesquakie earned a total of \$1,200 working in the harvest.¹⁴⁶ Much of the money the Mesquakie earned went to pay for necessities they had long been without, but they always managed to save a little money so they could buy land.

During these early years under the supervision of the government, the various Indian agents continually attempted to interest the Mesquakie in settling permanently on farms. But the Mesquakie stubbornly clung to their lifetime habit of leaving their summer village after the fall payment, dispersing in small winter hunting camps all over Iowa, and then returning to the settlement in time for the spring payment. In the

spring they made maple sugar, and in the summer they cultivated small patches of corn, beans, and squashes.¹⁴⁷ The Indian Bureau attempted to stop the roving habits of the Mesquakie by erecting a school on the settlement in 1875. The Mesquakie strongly opposed the school, however, and refused to attend. The agent did manage to get a few Mesquakie children to attend for a short time, but the school was forced to close when they left with their parents to go on the winter hunt in the fall.¹⁴⁸

By 1876, the 341 Mesquakie living on the settlement cultivated about 125 acres of land but still derived most of their income from the sale of furs and ponies and from working as hired hands.¹⁴⁹ In spite of the government's dim view of the Mesquakie roving habits, by 1876, the Indians had saved enough money to purchase 273 additional acres of land for \$5,900. Thus the Mesquakie continued to increase the size of their home, and thereby provide even more security from the inroads of the white man.¹⁵⁰

The Indians' increased feeling of security quickly disappeared, however, when the Bureau of Indian Affairs announced that in the future, the annuity rolls would have to list the names of all the Indians on the settlement. In the past the government had only required the head of each family to appear on the roll. The Mesquakie immediately became suspicious of the motives of the government in changing the form of the annuity rolls. They remembered that such a

technique had been used in Kansas prior to the allotment of lands to individuals, and they feared the government might try the same trick again. Because of this fear, the Mesquakie refused to sign the rolls at all. The Indian Bureau then refused to pay the annuities. Consequently, with both sides refusing to give in, affairs stood at a stalemate.¹⁵¹ Without their annuities, however, the Mesquakie could not pay the taxes on their land and the county claimed their land for the unpaid taxes in 1878. The Indians had until October, 1882, to reclaim the land, but as late as 1880, they still refused to budge from their position.¹⁵² The Indians were bolstered in their stand by the strong opposition of their beloved chief, Maw mew wah ne kah, who had left Kansas in 1861 to become chief of the tribe at Tama. In July of 1881, however, the old chief died. His eldest son succeeded him but died a few weeks later. Because the next in line, Muck que push e to (Old Bear) was only a child, the tribal council selected Push e to ne qua to be chief.¹⁵³ In January of 1882, the new chief and the tribal council went to Washington, D. C., to request the payment of the annuities. The Secretary of the Interior, Henry M. Teller, told the Indians the government could do nothing until the Mesquakie signed the new rolls. The delegation finally decided to accept the new form.

The annuities had piled up over the years and amounted to over \$40,000 by 1882. The government paid \$20,000 of this money in May and the other \$20,000 in August. When the

Mesquakie received the annuity money, they immediately paid up all the old debts owed to merchants and to the county. After the Mesquakie reclaimed their land they had only \$3,000 of the original sum left. They used this money to increase the size of their land holdings by 120 acres.¹⁵⁴ In 1883, the Mesquakie used \$13,000 of their annuity funds to purchase an additional 365 acres of land. Thus by the end of 1883, the Mesquakie had managed to regain the land they lost due to unpaid taxes and even increased their holdings to a total of 1,425 acres.¹⁵⁵ After the last purchase, the Mesquakie again found themselves with no cash surplus, but by 1888, they managed to accumulate enough money to purchase another 10.85 acres of land for \$434.¹⁵⁶

In 1892, the government paid the Mesquakie \$30,000 as their share of the lands the Sac and Fox had sold in Oklahoma. The Mesquakie used this money and over \$20,000 more to purchase still more land from the nearby whites, and by 1895 the Indians had increased their total acreage to 2,800 acres.¹⁵⁷ They leased one section of 520 acres of this land to a white farmer for \$740 and a quarter-section of 187 acres to another farmer for \$400. The Mesquakie used the money from these lands to pay the taxes on the entire settlement. Of the remaining 2,093 acres, the Mesquakie cultivated only 600 acres, however, and still considered their 500 ponies as their main source of wealth. With the safety of their lands assured, the Mesquakie gave no indication of changing their living

habits.¹⁵⁸ They still followed the same life cycle and still resisted the white man's school, religion, and way of life. They were poor but happy and apparently got along quite well according to their standards. They wished only to be left alone.

The people of Tama, however, viewed the Indians' primitive existence with great dismay. By white standards, the Mesquakie living standards were indeed primitive as can be seen from the following account written by a woman who visited the settlement in the early 1880's:

All around the tent, and piled up against it to some height, was a heterogeneous mass containing baskets, bundles, pieces of rope, moccasins, and a saddle or two, the whole covered with the smoke and dust of the centuries, or so it appeared. Hanging from the top of the tent was an old carpet bag that looked like a relic of the anti-diluvian period, and scattered about in anything but delightful confusion, dried squash, strings of beads, pieces of rusty pork, etc., were seen. The presiding genius of the lodge was a toothless old squaw, antiquated and grim, a lineal descendant of the Witch of Endor, we felt convinced. In a burst of confidence this old woman gravely informed us the earth was her mother, which we did not attempt to deny, for her expressive lineaments bore upon them strong-proof, if not of the relationship claimed, at least of her familiarity with mother earth.

Two other women, with the usual number of babies and dogs, and a couple of Indians who were shrouded in their blankets, their heads and feet alone being visible, were the other occupants of the tent. A wood fire in the center almost blinded the eyes of the inmates with smoke, and the ashes blown about by the wind rested lightly and lovingly on the faces and clothing of the visitors. A strange sight truly, was this scene and its surroundings to unaccustomed eyes, while semibarbarism as contrasted to civilization presented anything but an alluring aspect.¹⁵⁹

Thus the people of these nearby white communities felt they must do something to educate and Christianize the Mesquakie and generally lift them above their savage, morbid condition. The fact that the Mesquakie determined to stick to their beliefs and had boasted that they would be the last Indians to adopt the white man's civilization simply poured more salt on the moral conscience of the white community. Thus on June 2, 1895, the people of Tama and Toledo formed the Indian Rights Association of Iowa.¹⁶⁰

In 1896, as a direct result of lobbying activities of this Association, the State of Iowa transferred jurisdiction over the Mesquakie to the United States Government. The State of Iowa, however, retained control over any judicial process within the settlement, jurisdiction of crimes against the laws of Iowa committed within the settlement by Indians or others, and the privilege of establishing and maintaining highways. The state also retained the power of eminent domain over Indian lands for state and county purposes. Even with these restrictions, Congress accepted jurisdiction over the Mesquakie Indians by an act passed on June 10, 1896. In the same act, Congress transferred the title of the lands to the Secretary of the Interior to be held in trust for the Mesquakie.¹⁶¹

This transfer of authority fundamentally altered the life of the Mesquakie. Prior to 1896, the Mesquakie had been relatively free from federal control. Because of the Indians'

special position as taxpayers in Iowa, the Indian agents on the settlement could exercise only very limited powers in attempting to effect changes in their customs and mode of living. Thus under the spoils system, the job of Indian agent became a political plum for local residents who usually had other interests to keep them busy. Most of these agents did little for the Indians other than deliver the annual annuities. Therefore, during the years from 1857 to 1896, the Mesquakie could accept or reject elements of white culture at face value as the needs and desires of the tribe dictated. After 1896, however, they endured explicit subordination to the federal agent. They thus lost their position of substantial equality with their white neighbors and became a special people. In making any decisions regarding acceptance or rejection of white culture from that time on, the Mesquakie had to balance their own desires for their future against what the federal government thought they should want.¹⁶²

CHAPTER X

RESISTANCE

After the transfer of jurisdiction over the Mesquakie, the Indian agent's powers increased considerably. In attempting to exercise these powers, the agent managed to widen and intensify the factional split that already existed between the progressive and conservative groups of Mesquakie.

In 1897, the State of Iowa built Highway 30 through the main part of the settlement where it crossed the Iowa River. This action caused considerable commotion in the tribe as most of the tribe opposed the road. A few of the more progressive Indians, however, approved of the state's action.

Then in 1898, the Indian agent, Horace M. Rebok, appointed three of the more progressive Indians as reservation policemen in an attempt to achieve more law and order on the settlement. His action caused considerable turmoil among the Mesquakie, and the tribe held frequent councils in an attempt to force the three policemen to quit. In spite of the threats of violence voiced by other members of the tribe, these three men remained on their jobs.

The agent created additional controversy when he gave the Indians their annuity payment. Previously the government had paid the annuities in quarterly installments, but in 1898, the Indian Bureau changed its policy and made the payments semi-annually. About one-fourth of the tribe, led by Old Bear

(Muck que push e to) strongly objected to this method of payment and refused to accept the annuity. Old Bear, the youngest son of the former chief, Maw mew wah ne kah, had attempted to attain the chieftainship of the tribe for more than a year. He used the strong feeling against government policies to create dissension and contention in the tribe. He violently opposed many innovations that had occurred in recent years and had gained the support of many of the old men and women of the tribe who also opposed the progressive measures. Because the first purchase of land had been made in the names of five members of the tribe rather than in the name of the tribe as a whole, Old Bear claimed that the original 80 acres belonged to him and one other man as the only surviving heirs. Old Bear further contended that the tribe should officially recognize him as chief and depose Push e to ne qua. He claimed that the state had no right to establish a road on the settlement and that the government had no right to pay the annuity semi-annually. He also objected to the hiring of Indian policemen, to schools, to the Indians owning cattle on Indian land, and according to the Indian agent, he generally objected to any attempt at industry or frugality on the part of the tribe. Old Bear presented his complaints to the Governor of Iowa who told him that since the Indian Bureau considered Push e to ne qua the legitimate representative of the tribe, the State of Iowa could do nothing about the matter.¹⁶³

Another area of dispute concerned the education of Indian

children. In 1896, Congress had appropriated \$35,000 for an Indian boarding school near the settlement. The Indian Bureau purchased a 70-acre site adjoining the town of Toledo, and workers completed the construction of the school in time for it to open by September of 1898. In spite of the Indian Bureau's efforts, however, the entire tribe, led by Push e to ne qua and the council, refused to send their children to the new school. During this time, the agent heard one old Indian say he would send his daughter to jail but not to school. The tribe even refused their annuities for a time because they feared that if they accepted them, the government might then claim the right to put the children in school.¹⁶⁴

In November of 1898, the government invited the chief and three of the council members to Washington, D. C., to discuss the school situation. The government promised to officially recognize Push e to ne qua as chief of the Mesquakie Indians and give him the \$500 a year salary due him under the terms of the Treaty of 1867. In return, the chief had to promise to support the school. When Push e to ne qua refused to accept this offer, the government threatened to send Winnebago children from other areas to the settlement to go to school. The chief and the council still refused to support the school even though Winnebago infiltration of the settlement might lead to intermarriage and eventual dilution of tribal annuities. Finally, however, after considerable pressure from the government, the chief capitulated and, along with the

council members, enrolled his children in the school on December 18, 1898. The other members of the tribe did not follow the lead of the council and refused to send their children to school. This action of the chief and the council brought more supporters into the faction in favor of establishing Old Bear as hereditary chief.¹⁶⁵

At about this same time, the Tama County Court appointed the Indian agent, W. G. Malin, as guardian over a number of Indian children. The parents had requested such action because they could not adequately provide for or control the youngsters. Then in 1899, the agent placed one of his wards, a girl, in the boarding school. The girl's parents and many of the members of the tribe protested the action of the agent and took the case to court. In a far reaching decision, Judge O. P. Shiras of Dubuque ruled that the Tama County Court had no authority to appoint the agent as guardian over Indians. Judge Shiras went on to say that by transferring the Indians to federal jurisdiction in 1896, the State of Iowa removed the Mesquakie from the jurisdiction of the state courts also. As a result of this court decision, the average daily attendance at the school dropped from 44.7 to just 20.4.¹⁶⁶

After this time the Mesquakie never really supported the school and the Indian Bureau had to bring in Indians from other agencies to fill the school. Finally in 1911, the Indian Bureau closed the school for lack of students, and in 1912, they converted the building into a tuberculosis sanitorium for

young Indians.¹⁶⁷

During the years from 1900 to 1912, a number of the younger Indians began to show interest in adopting a few of the white man's ideas. In 1901, a smallpox epidemic occurred on the settlement. After it had run its course, the agent and officials of the State Board of Health burned all wickiups, clothing, and other infected possessions of the Mesquakie. The State of Iowa then built twenty-four new board houses to furnish housing for the Mesquakie. The state also furnished 2,700 yards of duck to provide tents for those Mesquakie who still refused to live in a white man's house. After the epidemic, the Mesquakie did not live together in the summer village again, but scattered all over the settlement to live.¹⁶⁸ In 1902, Elizabeth Campbell established a Presbyterian mission on the settlement and during the next few years it attracted a few of the more progressive Indians, but most of these Indians continued to practice their native religion concurrently.¹⁶⁹ In addition to expressing some interest in the white man's religion, a number of the younger Indians from the more progressive families expressed a desire to go to Indian trade schools such as Chilocco or Haskell Institute. The majority of the Mesquakie, however, continued in their firm resistance to the ways of the white man.¹⁷⁰

CHAPTER XI

THE POW WOW AND COUNCIL FIRES, 1913 TO 1929

In 1913, the Mesquakie held their first Pow Wow especially for the interested white townsfolk. The Pow Wow actually came about as a part of the seasonal religious ceremonies. It began originally as an informal celebration--just a few Indians dancing together for their own enjoyment on a Sunday afternoon. Before long, a few white people began to come to the settlement to watch the Indians perform the various dances. The Indians did not mind the presence of the white men because they sometimes could earn a little extra money by passing the hat. Then in 1913, Chief Push e to ne qua organized the dancing as a week-long informal exhibition for the white townsfolk. The Indians held the Pow Wow on the raw prairie grounds on the south bank of the Iowa River, just north of U. S. Highway 30 that passed through the settlement. The first Pow Wow was simple in arrangement with four or five wickiups arranged in a circle enclosing the dancing ground. The dancers, mostly older men who knew the intricate steps of the dances, performed almost naked. Besides the Mesquakie, representatives from three other tribes took part in the event. In addition to the dancing, a twelve-piece Mesquakie band played for the crowd and the younger men put on an exhibition of the Indian game of la crosse. During the next few years, the Mesquakie continued to operate and manage the Pow Wow

entirely on their own. However, in 1922, Clifford Ellis, the Indian farmer on the settlement, along with an interested friend of the Indians, Joseph Svacina, helped the Mesquakie organize the Pow Wow Association in order to draw larger crowds. These men persuaded the Mesquakie to move the site from the hot sun-baked prairie to a spot underneath the trees on the north side of the Iowa River. This move made the performance cooler for the dancers and provided more pleasant surroundings for the white visitors. The Indians reduced the length of the Pow Wow to four days and charged admission. The Pow Wow Association distributed the profits from the Pow Wow equally among the participants regardless of the number of performances each one gave. At the 1922 Pow Wow, each dancer received \$20.¹⁷¹

The government viewed the Pow Wow as a profitable but demoralizing institution. The agent observed that the Mesquakie still strongly opposed the white man's way of living, and he felt that the Pow Wow only served to increase their resistance to progress. He also objected to the Pow Wow because of the excessive drinking by the Indians during the week's festivities. The agent did not openly oppose the Pow Wow, however, and it continued to increase in popularity among the white people as well as the Mesquakie.¹⁷²

During the 1920's, the Mesquakie families continued to increase the size of their garden plots and farms. Although almost all the men worked small farms or had little garden

plots during the summer, many of the Mesquakie men continued to hunt and trap along the creeks and streams of Iowa during the winter. The men not engaged in farming usually found jobs as farm hands, construction workers, or worked on the railroad. Thus while the Indians were poor, they experienced no actual destitution. After considerable effort, the Indian superintendent (Indian agent) on the settlement finally succeeded in having some of the families capitalize their annuity funds and use the proceeds to build frame houses of two to four rooms. Thus by 1927, all the Indians lived in some type of frame house.¹⁷³ Unfortunately during the depression, many of the people who had drawn out their money from the trust fund to build the houses found they did not have enough money to live on. Consequently, many of these people had to sell the houses and move in with relatives.¹⁷⁴

Meanwhile, the Mesquakie faced increasing problems with regard to the tribal council. In 1919, Chief Push e to ne qua died, and the federal government refused to appoint a successor. Furthermore, the Agency superintendent reduced the council from the traditional twelve members to five and assumed the right to appoint future councilmen. Thus the council functioned as a self-perpetuating oligarchy, replacing its members with others of pro-white orientation. Then in 1929, the tribe managed to place three conservatives on the council. This action increased the council to six members with three members from each faction. The battle for control of the council

became so bitter that the two groups on the council refused to talk to one another. Consequently, the council never met, and instead of providing a passageway for directives from the government, it became an almost impenetrable buffer.¹⁷⁵

CHAPTER XII

EDUCATION AND REORGANIZATION, 1930 TO 1940

During the years after 1900, the Mesquakie began to realize the importance of getting a white man's education. Because the Mesquakie used their native tongue almost entirely when on the settlement, they found it very difficult to express themselves when conducting business with the white men. Thus they began to realize that unless they accepted the white man's education, the tribe might face eventual extinction because they could not understand and thus could not compete in the white man's world. By the end of the 1920's, a number of Mesquakie children were attending one of the two day schools on the settlement. A major cause of this change in attitude, however, came about because the Indian Bureau had given the Agency superintendent of the settlement the authority to force enrollment in the day school by whatever means he felt necessary. Although the superintendent never actually used force to increase enrollment, the Mesquakie well realized that he might withhold their annuities if they did not send their children to the day school.¹⁷⁶

Many of the Mesquakie attended off and on, however, and few went past the fourth grade. During these years, a number of the more progressive families sent their children to Indian trade schools in other states, and from 1929 to 1931 a few sent their children to high school in Montour, Iowa.

The union of the Montour and the Mesquakie children proved to be an unhappy one. The Mesquakie complained that the people of Montour discriminated against their children, and the Montour people complained that the Indian children had unhealthy habits and spread disease among the white children. Furthermore, (and probably the real reason for the townspeople's ill feeling) the townspeople complained because they had to assume the entire tax burden of the Mesquakie children.¹⁷⁷

In 1931, the government signed a contract with Montour by which the high school would make its facilities available to the Indians in return for tuition charges paid by the government. This arrangement satisfied the Montour people, but the Indians had no part in signing this agreement. The government had not considered the wishes of the Mesquakie. The Indian superintendent, Dr. Breid, made the arrangements in secret without even consulting the tribe.

The tribe expressed great dissatisfaction with the treatment they had received and organized a Student-Parents' Association to deal in all matters relating to the school.¹⁷⁸ The Mesquakie held a negative attitude toward the arbitrary educational policies of the government, but not toward education itself. The Indians' antagonism toward these policies became more intense during the four-year period of school attendance at Montour from 1930 to 1934.¹⁷⁹ In order to help solve their problems, the Indian Student-Parents' Association

formulated a plan for local schooling. When the Indian Bureau failed to acknowledge the receipt of the plan, the Mesquakie held a mass meeting on August 30, 1934, and passed resolutions stating that the tribe would not recognize the contract with the Montour school board, and would not send their children to the school.¹⁸⁰

About the time the Mesquakie passed their resolutions, John C. Collier, new chief of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, formulated a new policy of cooperation between the government and the Indians. In implementing this policy, the Bureau sent a group headed by Dr. W. C. Ryan, Director of Indian Education, to Tama to help straighten out the educational difficulties with the Mesquakie. The two groups met in January, 1935. At the meeting the Indians reversed their previous stand and insisted on having kindergarten through grade eight on the settlement, but wanted to send their children to Tama for grades nine through twelve. The government would pay the tuition at Tama. The Mesquakie also desired a course of study for the day school that would be similar to the local school board policy.¹⁸¹

At the meeting with the Indians, Dr. Ryan stated the Bureau's new policy of cooperation. After considerable discussion, the two groups finally agreed that the government would pay tuition to an accredited high school for the Indian children and the Indians would assume the responsibility for attendance. The government would operate the new Indian

school on the settlement, but would expect the Mesquakie to assume responsibility through an educational committee to represent the tribe in school matters. Furthermore, the course of study in the Indian day schools would be the same as that of the state schools.¹⁸² The government agreed that beginning August 22, 1935, the ten Mesquakie children eligible to attend high school would go to Tama, while grades kindergarten through eight would attend the Sac and Fox Day School.¹⁸³ After the meeting, all the Mesquakie expressed a great deal of pleasure at having their wishes granted for once.¹⁸⁴

Congress temporarily sidetracked the plans for a new day school when it failed to appropriate the necessary funds, but finally in 1937, the Indian Bureau built a \$45,000 school on the settlement. They opened the new building on January 7, 1938, and ninety Mesquakie children attended.¹⁸⁵

On the opening day of the new day school, Percy Bear made an address that was translated by George Young Bear.

'The speaker told the Indians that the day had arrived when the Indians must look forward to education as a means of adjustment, that the old days were good, but could not be brought back; and that the Indians must, and would take advantage of the opportunities which they had for promoting their welfare and obtaining knowledge which would help them make adjustments under conditions of the present time. He stated that he could not speak English well, and that he therefore was handicapped in his dealings with the white man.'¹⁸⁶

With the education question settled, the Indian Bureau

officials next turned their attention to the tribal council. In keeping with the Indian Bureau's new policy of cooperation, Congress had passed the Wheeler-Howard Act in 1934. This act gave Indian tribes the right to incorporate under a charter and establish a constitutional home rule government similar to that of their white neighbors. Under the new system the tribal council members would be elected by a vote of the entire tribe. When the Indian Bureau presented the plan to the Mesquakie in 1935, the conservative faction strongly opposed the proposal. They feared that a change in the organization of the tribal council would break the six-year political stalemate by giving the progressives control of the council. The progressive faction, on the other hand, wholeheartedly approved of the plan. They too, believed it would enable them to dominate the council and thus increase their control over tribal affairs. Consequently, the Young Bear group worked very hard to push through acceptance of the Wheeler-Howard Act. In June of 1935, the Mesquakie voted 63-18 to accept the Wheeler-Howard Act. The Young Bear group then formed a council and appointed a committee to draft a constitution. Four college-educated Indians, Edward Davenport, George Young Bear, Horace Poweshiek, and William Poweshiek worked for two years writing the constitution.¹⁸⁷ When these men finished drafting the constitution, they submitted the document to the Secretary of the Interior, Harold I. Ickes. Ickes approved the constitution and gave the members of the tribe thirty days to study the

document. Ickes set November 13, 1937, as the day for the Mesquakie to accept or reject the constitution. The older and more conservative members of the tribe protested the high-handed actions of the Young Bear faction and refused to participate in the election. Consequently, only 70 per cent of the tribe voted in the election, and the proposed constitution passed by the narrow margin of 80-78.¹⁸⁸

The constitution established a seven man council as the governing body for the tribe. The council could act on matters pertaining to agriculture; employment; federal, state, and local projects; education; health; taxation; and tribal membership. The council also had the power to assign tribal land to the members of the tribe, to settle disputes between members of the tribe, and to impose fines to enforce its decisions. It also could act to preserve law and order.¹⁸⁹

To hold a council office, a voter had to be a resident of the settlement, possessed of good character, be at least twenty-five years of age, and his parents had to be enrolled as members of the Mesquakie settlement. At the first election, the four candidates receiving the most votes were to hold office for four years, while the three candidates receiving the next highest votes were to hold office for two years. Thereafter, elections were to be held every two years for four-year terms. The council elected a chief, assistant chief, and a secretary-treasurer.¹⁹⁰

In the first part of January, 1938, the list of candidates

nominated earlier by the tribe was narrowed down by a primary election. Then in the latter part of January, the tribe elected seven members to the council. Horace Poweshiek, great-grandson of the original Chief Poweshiek became chief of the council. Edward Davenport, great-grandson of Colonel George L. Davenport, the first white settler in Davenport, Iowa, became assistant chief, and George Young Bear, grandson of Chief Push e to ne qua, became secretary-treasurer of the council.

The adoption of the constitution, and the outcome of the election created considerable strife within the tribe. As expected, the election gave control of the council to the progressive faction of the tribe. This faction faced strong opposition from the conservative members of the tribe led by the Old Bear family and the older members of the Young Bear family. After the election, the losing side appealed to the Governor of Iowa, N. G. Kraschel, in an attempt to throw out the election results.¹⁹¹ Chief Young Bear, father of George Young Bear and seventy-one year old head of the former council, appeared at the statehouse with an interpreter to protest the election. As the leader of the conservative faction, he pointed out that since the Mesquakie had purchased their land with their own money, they occupied a special position within the state. He claimed that because of this special position, the tribe could not legally accept the Wheeler-Howard Act. Thus the new constitution was void, and the new tribal council could not act for the tribe. The governor refused to take any

action, however, and the dispute continued. The Indian Bureau finally sent two representatives to the settlement. These officials quickly ended the argument by telling the conservatives that even though the Mesquakie owned their own land, legally the government placed them in the same category as Indians who lived on reservations.¹⁹²

With their position on the tribal council secured, the progressives then began to reorganize the Pow Wow Association along more democratic lines. With the help of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Mesquakie remodeled the Association in the form of a white organizational structure. Under the new structure, the tribe held elections to vote for committee members, who chose officers and appointed subcommittees to carry out the preparations for the Pow Wow. Thus, on the surface, the organization appeared quite similar to most white organizations. In actual practice, however, the Pow Wow Association continued to function according to traditional Mesquakie leadership patterns. The Mesquakie still kept the white authority roles, but they redefined these roles to fit their own unique needs. For example, the president of the Association appeared very ineffective by white standards. He displayed almost no initiative or direct authority. To the Mesquakie, the president's role resembled that of the traditional peace chief, who represented the traditional values of the society and symbolized the unity of the group. He was primarily a figurehead. The actual leader was the secretary,

a man competent in white ways, and not afraid to deal with and "talk up" to the whites. He served as the link between the local Indian group and the outside agencies. Although the Mesquakie held elections every two years for the Pow Wow committee positions, heredity largely determined membership on these committees. Thus in actual practice, the Mesquakie found a place on the committee for at least one representative of each important family.¹⁹³

In addition to the numerous political difficulties the Mesquakie encountered in the 1930's, they also had to face increasing economic problems. During the years from 1933 to 1937, drought reduced the size of their crops at the same time the depression reduced the prices of those crops. Furthermore, the increasing poverty of the white farmers reduced the incomes of those Mesquakie accustomed to working as hired farm hands.¹⁹⁴ In order to relieve the distressed conditions of the Mesquakie, the government initiated a number of work projects on the settlement. In 1935, President Roosevelt authorized the expenditure of \$842,000 for conservation work, road repair, improvement of the Pow Wow grounds, and other projects.¹⁹⁵ Thirty-three Mesquakie worked on these projects and earned \$45 a month for their work.¹⁹⁶ The economic conditions got worse, however, and by 1936, seventy-six of the ninety-one families on the settlement received some sort of relief.¹⁹⁷

Then in 1937, under the provisions of the constitution,

the tribal council assigned land to individuals so the tribe could take part in the Roosevelt Administration's A.A.A. The tribe assigned lands to forty-eight Mesquakie farmers, but only thirty-two Indians actually operated these farms. The others became landlords and rented their land to those Indians who wanted more land to farm. The farms ranged in size from 2 to 49 acres with most of the farms averaging 20 acres. The Indians planted these lands to corn, oats, and soybeans and seeded down some land for pasture. Most of the farms had very little livestock except for a team of horses and a few brood sows. The A.A.A. Program provided cash benefits to farmers who restricted their crop acreage and adopted soil conservation methods. Because the tribe owned the land as a whole, however, the government paid the benefits of the program to the entire tribe. Thus by considering the land as one large farm in 1937, the government paid the Mesquakie \$1,000 in benefits. But in 1938, the farms taken as one large unit exceeded the allotment quota. Thus the entire tribe became ineligible to receive any benefits. Therefore in 1939, a number of Mesquakie requested that the government consider them as individual farmers. The government agreed thus giving each individual Mesquakie the right to decide whether or not he wanted to participate in the program.¹⁹⁸

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAR YEARS

After the start of World War II, a number of Indian families began to take up gardening. By June of 1942, all 112 families had their own vegetable gardens. Altogether, the gardens amounted to about 18 acres of land. In addition to the individual plots, the WPA and the Indian agency had charge of 23 acres planted in vegetables which the Indians harvested and then canned for relief purposes on the settlement.¹⁹⁹ With the help of the federal government the Mesquakie canned the vegetables themselves in a canning factory they operated on a community cooperative basis. Any member of the tribe could have his vegetables canned for a small charge which was placed in a fund to solve relief problems in the tribe. In the way of further relief to the tribe, the more prosperous families donated a part of their canned goods to the less fortunate and to the old people of the tribe.²⁰⁰

Although the settlement contained 3,253 acres of land in 1942, the Mesquakie rented out 520 acres of the best land to a white farmer to pay for the taxes of the entire property. Of the 2,730 remaining acres, only 1,068 acres could be cultivated by the Indians. The Mesquakie planted 1,000 acres of this land to sweet corn under contract to the canning factory at Toledo and 24 acres to beans under contract to the Marshalltown Canning Company.²⁰¹ The livestock on the settlement consisted

of 4,500 baby chicks, 1,800 laying hens, 7 cows, and 80 spring pigs.²⁰²

In 1942, the government reported 501 Indians on the census rolls but 53 of these Indians lived outside the settlement. Of the 112 families of 448 people actually on the settlement, 22 families received relief from the county. However, none of the families were entirely self-supporting and all received relief at one time or another. In this respect, the Mesquakie echoed the conditions present in many states at that time. The tuberculosis sanitorium which had a payroll of \$12,000 employed many of the Mesquakie. The Indian C.C.C., which paid out \$10,000 per year, and the WPA which paid out an additional \$10,000 also employed many of the Indians.²⁰³

On June 4, 1942, the Iowa River flooded in the worst summer flood since 1918. The Iowa River inundated over 22,000 acres of Tama County land and destroyed 18,000 acres of crops. The river overflowed onto nearly half of the settlement and totally destroyed 345 acres causing a loss of about \$20,000. Fortunately, the WPA relief project had several thousand quarts of canned vegetables available, and the relief agencies distributed these to the Indians. Then on June 30, 1942, the Indian Bureau shut down the sanitorium and ceased the operation of the Indian C.C.C. In order to find jobs, a number of Indians left the settlement to do farm work as hired hands. Some went to Waverly, Iowa, to work for a sugar beet company. Many others took jobs in defense plants in Des Moines, Chicago,

and Cedar Rapids. In addition to those who left the settlement to find jobs, twenty Mesquakie boys left to join the armed forces. The Mesquakie who left Tama continued to keep their close ties to the settlement, however, and often returned on weekends to visit their families and friends. The boys in the service came home whenever possible.²⁰⁴

The United States' entrance into World War II helped considerably to reduce the financial difficulties of the Mesquakie. The tribe continued to be plagued with political problems, however. The Young Bear faction had retained control of the tribal council in the years after 1937 but faced increasing opposition to their leadership in the early 1940's. During these years, the political problems revolved around the issue of law and order on the settlement. Prior to the depression, most of the crimes on the settlement involved petty mischief by young boys or occasional fisticuffs on the part of some drunken Indians. But by the start of the war, the nature of the crimes had changed and a number of Indians became involved in petty thefts and destruction of private property on the settlement. The increase in lawlessness caused a great deal of concern among the whites as well as among many of the Indians. To solve the problem, the Bureau of Indian Affairs established an all-Indian court on the settlement in 1941 and revived the Indian police system that had been defunct for many years. The Bureau appointed George Young Bear to serve as judge and allowed the Indians to manage their own affairs

in maintaining order on the settlement and in dealing out punishment to offenders. Under the new set-up, all testimony had to be given in the Mesquakie language, and the Indians had the right to establish their own law code subject to approval of the Secretary of the Interior.²⁰⁵ The Indian Bureau had great hopes for this court system because it filled the gap between state and federal jurisdiction that had been created by Judge Shiras's court decision in 1899. The Bureau felt the court would be a success because the Indians would actually be handling their own affairs.²⁰⁶

Unfortunately, the establishment of the white organizational court system was in complete conflict with traditional Mesquakie practices. The Mesquakie Nation had always cherished their independence as individuals, and they believed it dangerous and immoral for one person to try and control the actions of another. Thus Mesquakie culture and custom traditionally prohibited the concentration of power in the hands of any one person. Consequently, they had few positions of authority, and the people occupying these positions could exercise their authority only for a very limited time and with the consent of the entire tribe.²⁰⁷ Thus the tribe was never really satisfied with the operation of the Indian court and became increasingly critical of the judge, George Young Bear, during the years from 1941 to 1943. The conservative faction complained that the judge treated their members unfairly by not giving them fair trials. Members of the progressive

faction also attacked the actions of the judge.²⁰⁸ The opposition of the tribe became so great that in 1943 members of both factions sent letters to the Bureau of Indian Affairs asking that the court system be discontinued. The Bureau finally relented and a few months later abolished the court entirely. The failure of the tribal court greatly reduced the popularity of the Young Bear faction. For a considerable time afterward, the tribe associated them with the idea of sacrificing traditional Mesquakie culture in order to gain acceptance from the white man.

During the years from 1937 to 1943, the progressive faction had remained in control of the council despite the increasing tribal support for the conservatives. Then in 1943, largely due to the failure of the tribal court, the conservatives managed to gain five of the seven seats on the council. The victory for the conservatives virtually ended the progressive domination of the council and their control of tribal affairs. In later years, control of the council shifted from one group to the other depending upon the issues at the time and the personalities of the candidates. Neither group successfully dominated the council again.²⁰⁹

In 1944, the State of Iowa adopted the county-state-federal program of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), and this led to further dissension on the Indian settlement. Under the program, the federal government promised to pay half the cost, while the state and the county each agreed to pay

one-fourth of the cost of the program. Tama County, however, questioned the right of the Indians to be included in the program even though they had been regarded as eligible for Iowa old age assistance and aid to the blind.²¹⁰ Both the State Attorney General's office and the Department of the Interior ruled that Indian youngsters should receive such grants without discrimination. In spite of this ruling, the county turned down ADC applications from four Indian mothers. The county's share of the ADC payments to the eight children of these women amounted to only \$25, but the county feared that by accepting the applications, they would set a precedent for making the 500 Indians on the settlement eligible for all types of relief. Because the federal sponsored program prohibited discrimination, the State Social Welfare Board feared the government might withdraw its grants to Iowa. Tama County refused to change its policy, and John R. Reid, a member of the Tama County Board of Supervisors, gave the following reason:

We are not concerned about the initial cost in these ADC cases. We've got 500 Indians out there. While they are working right now, I've seen the time when practically all of them were on relief of one sort or another.

When we start collecting levies from the Indians, the Indians will be ours and not the federal government's. I feel the government owes them a lot more than Tama County owes them.

The whole thing boils down to this, we are being asked to assume a potential burden of 80 or 90 children in order to get aid for 30 or 40 of our own. I don't think anybody will contend that is a good deal for us.

I want to see them retain their identity. The government apparently wants to see them assimilated. They have more prestige as full-

blooded Indians than they would have as half or quarter-breeds.²¹¹

Reid went on to say that the county would not have the slightest objection to ADC payments if the state and the federal government together shared the cost. He termed the Mesquakie's presence in Tama a geographical happenstance and not a situation which constituted the responsibility of Tama County alone. He concluded by saying he had always been a friend of the Indians.

The dispute carried over to the settlement where the Indians became quickly divided on the issue. One faction wanted the ADC money and complained that the county had discriminated against the Indians. Willie Poweshiek, a progressive member of the tribal council, assailed county officials for "pretending interest" in the Mesquakie only before elections:

We have wondered many times if we were really citizens of the United States, but just before election our fears are vanquished by our county officials who want our votes. They make a habit of coming out to visit us the night before election.

They give us sandwiches and cigars and kiss our babies and pat us on the back with promises to build our roads and bridges. But when the time comes that we need these promises to be fulfilled, they don't know us and question with grave doubts about our citizenship.

The county should be proud to list our Indian boys with all others in the county who have left their homes to take up the cause for democracy and the four freedoms, but certain county officials still think the Indian is not eligible for some of the benefits of the county where we have made our home for the last 90 years.²¹²

Poweshiek added that the Indians wondered where their tax money had been going all those years. In 1944, the Mesquakie paid \$545.22 in real estate taxes. The government exempted them from poor relief, court expense, soldier's relief, testing of cattle for diseases and the county emergency fund. They paid no school taxes, but the government included various road levies in their property taxes.²¹³

Another faction among the Mesquakie, however, did not want the ADC money. This group feared the ADC plan might become the first step toward putting the Indians under all the various tax levies. They believed such a trend would ultimately result in the withdrawal of the federal government from its paternalistic position as guardian of the Indian's welfare. The members of this faction strongly opposed beginning "state control." Furthermore, they feared the federal government wanted to dump the Indians onto the state--an action that would cause the Mesquakie to pay more taxes. Eventually the pressure from the county and from other Mesquakie became so great, that three of the four women withdrew their applications for ADC. The County Board then rejected the fourth application on the grounds that the mother did not furnish a proper home for her children. The question of Indian ADC thus ended in a temporary stalemate, but it continued to cause bitter discussion among the Indians on the settlement.²¹⁴

In May of 1944, during the height of the ADC controversy, the Indian Bureau sent a letter to the Mesquakie proposing to

help them buy land. The Bureau offered to help the tribe purchase 300 acres of land each year for ten years in order to increase the number of acres farmed by the Mesquakie, better the tribe's standard of living, and provide more room for future generations. The Bureau also suggested a number of other projects to avert a serious unemployment problem after the war. Actually, the Bureau had conceived an excellent plan to increase the Mesquakie's self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, they also suggested that the Mesquakie consider the idea that it might be well for them to depend less on the federal government and utilize the state and local government processes to a greater extent.²¹⁵ Needless to say, this suggestion proved to be a masterpiece of ill-timing. The Mesquakie had always been wary of any plan to reduce their dependence on the federal government, and the ADC controversy made them even more aware of the possibility of losing federal support. Thus, when the Indian Bureau sent its letter, the Mesquakie feared the government had some hidden purpose in mind and consequently turned down the proposal to buy more land.²¹⁶

CHAPTER XIV

POSTWAR PROBLEMS

When the Indian Bureau abolished the Indian court and Indian police system in 1943, the Indians again found themselves without adequate police protection. After the war, a number of incidents occurred on the settlement that required the services of the city or county police. These law enforcing agencies sent men to the settlement, but the policemen took no action because the State of Iowa lacked jurisdiction over the tribe. Thus the Mesquakie had no Indian, local, state, or federal police force on the settlement.²¹⁷ Many Tama County citizens became seriously concerned about the increase of lawlessness among the Mesquakie. In 1947, a number of groups in the area adopted resolutions proposing that the federal government give local courts and police jurisdiction over the Indians at Tama. The DAR made one such proposal to the Iowa Congressmen in Washington, D. C., and further asked that authority be granted for the policing of the settlement. This resolution also pointed out that more than a hundred Indians of voting age had asked for state aid in preserving law and order on the settlement.²¹⁸

In October of 1947, two Indian Bureau officials visited the settlement for the purpose of discussing the possibility of organizing some sort of law enforcement system. The Indians took no action. Later a tribal council spokesman stated that

the officials had tried to get them to accept state rule, but that the Mesquakie believed that they were not yet ready for such action and feared that the local townspeople would try to take advantage of them.²¹⁹

On October 30, 1947, the Tama County Grand Jury, after making an investigation of the lawlessness on the settlement, recommended that the government grant to the State of Iowa and the local law enforcing agencies the right to enforce Iowa criminal laws on the settlement. It stated that the federal government followed a "do nothing" policy and that the evidence before them showed a gross lack of law and order on the Mesquakie settlement. The grand jury considered this lawlessness detrimental to the Indians as well as very troublesome to non-Indians and to law enforcement officers of Tama County. Furthermore, it stated that the Mesquakie Indians had shown no desire for law and order on the settlement, and the tribal council had refused to accept or offer a substitute for plans recently submitted by the federal government for the establishment of some kind of a court for the enforcement of law and order on the settlement.²²⁰ Then in December of 1947, John W. Gwynne of Iowa introduced a bill in the United States House of Representatives designed to give the State of Iowa the authority to enforce its criminal laws on the Indian settlement at Tama. Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa introduced an identical bill in the Senate. When the bill went to the House Indian Affairs subcommittee, the Tama County prosecutor,

W. J. Willett, went to testify.²²¹ Willett presented to the subcommittee, various exhibits consisting of photographs, resolutions, and reports concerning the Indians including reports received by the sheriff's office sent by the Indians themselves asking for protection from various minor offenses being committed on the settlement. Willett stated that during the past six to eight months, the sheriff's office and the office of the county attorney had received numerous calls from the Indians reporting that young Indians had beaten up some of the Indian women and old men on the Mesquakie settlement. Willett told the subcommittee the state had no authority to go on the settlement and make an arrest so he could do nothing to help the Indians in these cases. He stated that the federal government had jurisdiction over the ten major crimes and liquor violations, but that all other minor crimes were supposed to be handled by the Indians through their own Indian court. Unfortunately, such a court had been abandoned long ago. Willett went on to say that many of the Indians opposed jurisdiction by the local agencies. However, local police officers, and organizations all over the state felt that the Indians should be protected in cases of this kind whether they wanted it or not. These groups felt the Indians as a whole should receive the same protection afforded the people in the rest of the country.²²²

The Mesquakie held divergent views on the issue. The more progressive Indians favored the new law, while the

conservative faction disliked it. The argument cut across factional lines, however, because most of the Mesquakie from both factions did not want the bill to pass. They felt that since the whites took the land from the red man, the federal government should be held responsible for the supervision of Indian affairs. The Mesquakie feared that if Congress passed the proposed law, the Indian Bureau might eventually abandon them. If this occurred, their affairs would then be in the hands of the state who would neglect them.²²³ The Indians became even more alarmed about the loss of federal protection when the Indian Bureau closed the agency office in August of 1947.²²⁴

The Mesquakie argued that if the federal government wanted the Indians under state law because as voters they should be treated the same as everyone else, then why could they not buy beer as the white voters could? The Indians said that because they could not buy beer legally, they had to buy it from bootleggers. These bootleggers cheated them and often adulterated the liquor and even the beer. The Indians blamed the bootleg liquor for causing most of the trouble on the settlement.²²⁵ The widespread discontent among the Mesquakie over the issue of crime on the settlement and its proposed solution made the election in October of 1947 one of the most heated and exciting contests in many years. The results of the voting gave the progressives control of the council as the conservatives placed just three of their members on the

council.²²⁶

Congress passed the Law and Order Bill early in 1948. The law applied generally to all states in which the residing Indians had the right to vote in state and county elections. This restriction excluded only New Mexico and Arizona. In the law, Congress conferred jurisdiction on the State of Iowa over offenses committed by or against Indians on the Tama Indian settlement. Congress, however, retained jurisdiction over offenses defined by the laws of the United States committed by or against Indians on Indian reservations. Thus the federal government retained jurisdiction it then had over the ten major offenses committed on reservations. The states had jurisdiction of crimes not covered by federal authority.²²⁷

The conservative faction of the Mesquakie blamed the progressives for the passage of the new law and began to push for the abolishment of the tribal council and the return of the hereditary chieftainship. This group met in March of 1948 to organize a new tribal council. All the members of this self-appointed council were full-blooded Mesquakie who insisted on keeping the old traditions of the tribe. They raised \$300 so that five of the members could go to Washington, D. C., to talk with the Secretary of the Interior to find out what they had to do to make Jack Old Bear the head chief. They carried with them a petition signed by a number of Mesquakie protesting the passage of the Law and Order Bill.²²⁸

When the group returned to the settlement, after talking

with the Secretary, they called a mass meeting of the tribe. At the meeting, the Indians invited Jack Old Bear to return as hereditary chief. Old Bear, a direct descendant of the tribe's first rulers, had served as chief of the tribal council prior to 1946. He was fifty-six years old, spoke very little English and believed intransigently in the old traditional system of the Indians. Before Jack Old Bear could be installed as chief, however, the chief of the legally elected council, Frank Mitchell, had to be recalled, and the constitution amended.²²⁹ A week after the mass meeting the tribe voted to recall Frank Mitchell by a margin of 86-3. Next the Indians amended the constitution.²³⁰ The Secretary of the Interior had to approve any amendments to the constitution, however, and he refused to permit the return to the hereditary chieftainship. Thus, temporarily at least, the conservative faction failed in its bid to reestablish the traditional Mesquakie chief-council system.²³¹

When the attempt to amend the constitution failed, the Old Bear faction went to court in order to gain the right to conduct the business affairs of the tribe. The case came to trial before the United States District Court in Cedar Rapids in December of 1950. In January of 1951, the court dismissed Old Bear's suit and thereby ended the fight of the conservative faction to reestablish the hereditary chieftainship.²³² With the hereditary chieftainship ruled out as a way of ending the control of the tribe by the progressives, the conservative

faction then returned to the legally accepted means of seeking to gain control of the established council.

Because of the constant fighting between the two groups during the years from 1937 to 1951, the council, the only official governing body of the tribe, did not govern. Instead it merely provided a political battle ground.²³³ The main cause of the failure of the council to function as its founders had intended arose from the fact that the organizational structure of the council did not conform to the traditional Mesquakie governmental pattern. Traditionally, the Mesquakie tribal council contained a representative of each of the twelve important family groups. When someone made a new proposal in the council, these representatives, or head men, would discuss the matter thoroughly with their families before taking any action. A man's power in the council depended not upon his power to force the others to accept his idea but rather on his power to convince them of its advantages. In fact, any attempt by a councilman to coerce the other members of the council usually led to their refusal to even discuss that person's plan. Consequently, the council reached its decisions by unanimous decision only after long, leisurely discussion.

The constitution of 1937 on the other hand, gave the council the power to reach decisions by majority vote. Furthermore, by electing council members, the large families could control the voting and effectively exclude some important family groups from representation on the council. Typically,

the excluded families often refused to accept decisions which they had no part in forming. As a result, the council could not take any action without acting against the wishes of some group or other. Thus the Mesquakie experienced considerable discord while they slowly reformed the new council to fit into the traditional Mesquakie pattern.²³⁴

CHAPTER XV

FIREWATER

In addition to the political problems, the number of incidents requiring police action on the settlement continued to increase after 1948 despite the passage of the Law and Order Bill.⁶ By 1950 actual criminal activity on the settlement by young boys had extended to destruction of property, thefts from parents and grandparents, intoxication, and drunken driving. In October of 1950, the sheriff of Tama County arrested a gang of ten Indian boys for a series of crimes including taking cars, breaking and entering homes, thefts of money, placing water in the gas tanks of cars, placing objects on the rails, and breaking signal lights of the Northwestern Railroad that passed through the settlement. Although the Mesquakie had never committed serious crimes off the settlement, law enforcement officials feared that such actions might occur at any time.²³⁵

The increase in crime among the Mesquakie could be attributed to a number of causes. After World War II, the Mesquakie young people faced a period of considerable transition. Their way of life changed constantly. They had the traditional Mesquakie culture on one hand, and the white culture on the other. They had to accept some of the ways of the white man, but they could not accept all of them. Consequently, the manner in which each young Indian adjusted to

these two cultures largely determined his outlook on life. Although the settlement provided security from the harshness of the white man's world, it offered very little economic opportunity. The Mesquakie men were not good farmers and actually did not care to farm. Thus they had to turn to laboring jobs in order to survive. Some found jobs in Tama or Toledo, but most of the Mesquakie had to go to the larger towns such as Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Waterloo to find employment. A large number of these Indians succeeded in working in the world outside the settlement. But not all the Mesquakie could adjust to living in the white man's world and to the loneliness of being away from the settlement. So some of those that left finally returned, disgruntled and unhappy. Other Indians on the settlement chose to remain close to the tribal ways and ignore the white man's world. Thus the new generations of Indians at Tama faced many pressures in the years after the war. These pressures, that they could scarcely comprehend, created an atmosphere of considerable tension on the settlement. In addition, the fact that the Indians could not legally buy beer or liquor in Tama caused the Mesquakie young men to resent the discrimination of the whites, and to feel some resentment against the Indian way of life.

At the same time, the tribe no longer had much control over the social actions of the young people. Many parents let their children come and go as they pleased venting their pent up emotions in the form of destructive mischief and petty

crimes.²³⁶

The prohibition against selling liquor to the Indians continued to cause resentment during the years from 1950 to 1955. In 1954, Congress repealed a federal law against selling liquor to the Indians. Then in November of 1955, the State Attorney General ruled that the Mesquakie could legally buy beer in Iowa despite the Iowa law prohibiting selling liquor to Indians.²³⁷ By allowing the Indians to buy beer legally, the Tama County officials hoped they could partially solve the law and order problem on the settlement. Unfortunately, the number of incidents kept increasing. In 1956, the Indian Affairs committee of Iowa, appointed by Governor Leo Hoegh, proposed that a special law officer be appointed to live on the settlement. The proposal suggested that the county and federal governments each pay half of the cost of providing a special deputy sheriff for the job. While agreeing to the idea, the Indian Bureau did not know when federal funds would be available for the purpose, so the state temporarily dropped the plan.²³⁸

Finally in April of 1957, the Tama County Grand Jury passed a resolution calling for a policeman to be placed on the settlement.²³⁹ Consequently, in October of 1957, a policeman moved into a house on the outskirts of the settlement. At first the Mesquakie refused to help the policeman, but he finally gained their confidence and managed to considerably reduce the lawlessness on the settlement.²⁴⁰

During the next few years, however, incidents involving drunken Indians continued to cause trouble for the police and for the local tavern owners. This liquor problem led the Tama City Council to pass a resolution in July, 1960, prohibiting the sale of beer to Indians in Tama taverns. Violators would have their licenses revoked. This action by the Tama City Council caused quite a stir among the Indians. Two of the tribal council members met with a committee appointed by the mayor of Tama and with Ernest L. Magnuson, superintendent of the Sac and Fox school on the Indian settlement, to protest the action.²⁴¹

When the committee took no action, the Indians boycotted the Tama stores and did all their shopping including buying of beer in Toledo. Later, whites accustomed to fishing on the settlement reported that the Indians had kicked them out. In addition, various groups all over Iowa accused Tama of discriminating against the Indians. Finally in the face of this opposition by the Indians and whites, the council lifted the prohibition and again allowed the Indians to buy beer in Tama taverns.²⁴² The lull in the beer controversy proved to be only temporary however, for in 1963, the Iowa legislature passed a bill legalizing liquor by the drink in Iowa.¹⁶ The passage of this bill immediately created another controversy because in 1851 the State of Iowa had passed a law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors to Indians.²⁴³ This old law had caused little concern because prior to 1963, whites could not buy

liquor either. But according to the new law, Indians could go into a tavern and buy beer but not liquor, while whites could buy both. The Iowa legislature, however, made no attempt to repeal the old law, and by the end of 1963 the problem remained unsolved.

CHAPTER XVI

MESQUAKIE EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY

Unfortunately, the liquor and law enforcement problem was only one of several problems the Mesquakie had to deal with in recent years. During the early 1950's the Mesquakie found themselves faced with another crisis in education. The new crisis came about because of strong Congressional pressure on the Indian Bureau to forcibly terminate the Indian program. In an attempt to placate the agitated Congressmen, the Bureau made plans to transfer the administration of Indian affairs to state control. As part of this process, Bureau officials decided to transfer the operation of the Sac and Fox Day School to the State of Iowa. Bureau officials formulated a plan whereby the federal government would give special funds to the Tama Independent School District. The school district would then use these funds to pay the expenses of the school on the settlement.²⁴⁴

A representative of the Bureau presented the proposal to the Mesquakie at an open meeting on the settlement in March of 1952. The government official said that the Bureau wanted to turn the school over to the state because they were better qualified to operate the school. The representative, who apparently knew little about Mesquakie thinking, then made a serious blunder. He mentioned that Congress wondered how much longer it would take for the Indian Bureau to get the Indians

on their own feet, and didn't the Indians want to get rid of the Indian Bureau anyway. This statement naturally alarmed the Mesquakie, and they immediately became very suspicious of the government's proposal. They feared the federal government had some reason for making the change that the Indians did not know about. They thought the government might pay the cost of the school for a few years and then stop thereby forcing the Indians to pay the entire cost through increased taxes. At the meeting an Indian woman asked if the government would go ahead with the proposal even if the Indians turned it down. The representative replied that he just wanted the Indians to think about the proposal. All these words started the Indian people thinking:

The years since the white man came have been hard for our people. We had many lands and good hunting and then they came. First were the traders and then the settlers and the armies, and now, the Indian Service. The white man is powerful and always gets his way when he wants it. And through all these years, when he wanted something badly enough he had his own reasons for wanting it and we suffered. First they wanted big things like the land. Now it is something about the school.

They say this is a proposal to us, but they act as if they want the thing badly enough to go ahead whichever way we decide. It must be that they want something they aren't telling us.

If they want it badly enough to force us, it must be that they want to get in a position to dump us.²⁴⁵

The Indians suspected that the government would go through with the proposal whether the Mesquakie wanted it or not.

Consequently, the Indians refused to discuss the proposal

further.

When the Mesquakie did nothing with the proposal, the Bureau of Indian Affairs went ahead and arranged for the transfer of the day school to state authority without even consulting with the Indians.

Early in July, 1952, the Bureau met with the State Department of Public Instruction and worked out the complete details on curriculum, financing, administration, hiring, and firing.²⁴⁶

After the final details had been worked out, the Bureau officials arranged a meeting with the Indians. At the meeting, the Indian Service representative briefly described the arrangements of the transfer, and then asked if the Indians had any questions. The Mesquakie councilmen immediately began an "abrupt, bitter, and almost unending" denunciation of the proposal. They accused the Indian Service and the State Department of Public Instruction of sneaking behind their backs, and of being crooked and un-American. Indians rarely talked in such a manner. But the councilmen knew that the people would blame them for what had happened and that the political positions they had carefully built up for years would be destroyed right before their eyes.

The attitude of the Mesquakie came as a complete surprise to the two state representatives. The State Department of Public Instruction had assumed all along that the Indians had O.K.'d the transfer. When the two state representatives at

the June meeting realized that the Indians strongly opposed the plan, they rose and apologized to the Indians. The state officials then withdrew from the agreements already made with the Indian Service.²⁴⁷

Thus the Indians won a temporary victory over the Indian Service and the Sac and Fox Day School remained under federal supervision. The Indian Bureau retaliated the next year, however, by closing down the eighth grade in September of 1953. The Bureau then announced that if the fifteen Mesquakie eighth graders planned to attend school, they would have to go to Tama. An official of the Bureau of Indian Affairs made this announcement to the Indians at a meeting with representatives of the tribe, government, industry, and civic groups in Des Moines on September 11, 1953. The Bureau's representative, G. Warren Spaulding, chairman of the Indian Bureau's Division of Program Planning, went on to say that the cutting out of the eighth grade in the federally financed Indian school at Tama:

is one step in the right direction of getting the kiddies into the public schools. This is merely an incidental part of the whole overall program of eventually terminating federal activities as they relate to the various Indian tribes.

We're aiming to get the Indians on the same basis as everyone else, as part of the communities.

Spaulding went on to say that he thought it was time for the Mesquakie to be on their own.²⁴⁸

The Mesquakie had no choice but to send their children to Tama, but as they did so they realized that the next problem

facing them would be how to keep the seventh grade from being sent to Tama also.

For the next three years, the Indian Bureau took no further action on the school situation. Then in February of 1956, two teen-age Indians set fire to the Sac and Fox Day School. The firemen worked the entire night in an attempt to put out the fire and did not extinguish it until midmorning. The fire caused damage estimated at \$50,000.²⁴⁹ The Indian Bureau closed the school to make repairs, and sent the Mesquakie seventh graders to Tama on a temporary basis. The Bureau repaired enough of the building to send the Mesquakie children in the first six grades back to school. The Bureau later completed the repairs, but the seventh grade continued to go to school in Tama.²⁵⁰

The year 1956 did contain one bright spot for the Mesquakie in their battle for education, however. In March of 1956, the Gardner Cowles Foundation gave the Mesquakie a gift of \$17,500 to be used in a ten-year plan to send Mesquakie children to college. The money was placed in a fund and administered by the University of Chicago. The gift came about largely through the efforts of a group of social anthropologists from the University of Chicago.²⁵¹ Members of this group lived near the Tama Indian settlement from 1948 to 1959. They studied the Mesquakie extensively, and also attempted to help the Indians in whatever way they could.

The Chicago anthropologists established the college

education program as an experiment. They hoped that by providing the Mesquakie youngsters with professional training, the Indians could find good jobs within a seventy-five mile radius of Tama. Thus the college-educated Indians could maintain their close ties with the settlement and remain active in the political and social affairs of the Indian community. The Chicago group hoped that in this way, the college education plan would help the Indian community to develop a closer relationship to the larger white community. In addition, the plan would meet the needs of the individual Indians as well as provide for the continuance of the Mesquakie traditions.²⁵²

In addition to the Gardner Cowles grant that helped to launch the program, a number of organizations and colleges in Iowa also offered to give scholarships to deserving Indian students. The speed with which the Mesquakie accepted the program surprised even the Chicago anthropologists. In the fall of 1956, three Mesquakie students used the program funds to enter college. Later, four more attended, and in the second year of the program ten Mesquakie (the maximum number allowed under the program) were attending college.²⁵³

In spite of the program's excellent beginning, it achieved only partial success during the years after 1957. The education plan did increase Mesquakie interest in acquiring a college education. Unfortunately most of the Mesquakie who attended college could not find a place in white society and thus turned to the Indian Service for jobs. Consequently,

these college-educated Indians have benefited personally from the program, but their jobs have taken them out of Iowa. Thus they are lost to the settlement as far as social and political leadership are concerned.²⁵⁴

Early in the 1950's the University of Chicago group established a cooperative truck farm for the Mesquakie under the management of one of the anthropologists. The Mesquakie worked well on the project until 1955, when the white supervisor returned to Chicago. When the anthropologist left, he appointed one of the Indian workers to act as manager. Unfortunately, the Mesquakie did not care to work under an Indian manager, and the project died.

The University group later analyzed the project to find out why it failed. They noted that the cooperative truck farming project had little or no relationship to traditional Mesquakie practices. The project required a manager who could direct the organizing and operational procedures required in the new experience situation. The group concluded that while the Mesquakie could accept a white man in such an authoritarian role, the Indians believed it wrong for an Indian to occupy such a position.²⁵⁵ In the past the Mesquakie had carried on well-organized cooperative ventures, but these ventures did not require one person to exercise great authority. The activities succeeded because they had been established by tradition and rarely involved anything new. Thus in carrying out a particular activity, everyone involved

could just do as he had the previous year.²⁵⁶

After the failure of the cooperative truck farm project, the University of Chicago group decided to find another method of providing work on the settlement for the Mesquakie. The group first listed the conditions such a project must meet in order to be accepted by the Indians. The anthropologists believed that for any project to be successful, it should not violate the basic moral and religious values of Mesquakie society. It should not imply social death for the community by requiring acceptance of white culture with corresponding loss of traditional Mesquakie culture. It should permit identification with prestige-ful white occupation groups. And the activity should be built around traditional Mesquakie practices.²⁵⁷

In accordance with the suggested conditions, the Chicago team sponsored and helped to establish Tama Crafts as a Mesquakie Industry. They developed the industry as a small group project along the lines of individual craft work. An Indian, Charles Pushetonequa, a local artist, led the enterprise which capitalized on the special artistic abilities of the Mesquakie. The Mesquakie recognized Pushetonequa's ability in art work, and thus accepted his authority in designing, sketching, and other organizational work of Tama Crafts. Tama Crafts operated under a loose organization of individuals using traditional patterns of labor. The University team purposely kept the group small to permit time for an organizational

structure to develop gradually along traditional Mesquakie lines. By February of 1957, the group had fourteen members, but the Chicago anthropologists expected the number to eventually increase to about thirty Indians. A number of organizations around the state lent their support to the Indian project. Many Iowa newspapers, including the Des Moines Register, advertised Tama Crafts and the story of the industry appeared as a feature article in an Iowa magazine. The industry also received publicity on television and in a series of radio programs originating from Des Moines. In addition, the Iowa Federated Women's Clubs, the DAR, and an important social function of Des Moines society featured Tama Crafts.²⁵⁸

The Tama Crafts industry mainly produced ceramic tiles on which the Mesquakie produced Indian designs using a silk screening process. The Mesquakie sent the tiles all over the United States to such places as the United Nations Building, a museum in Washington, D. C., and Disneyland. The Indians also sent the tiles to a number of foreign countries, including Japan, New Zealand, Austria, and Scotland.

Unfortunately, Tama Crafts has been only partially successful as a Mesquakie industry. By 1963, the organization employed only thirteen people and under the management of an Indian, Robert Waseskuk, turned out about a hundred tiles a day.²⁵⁹ Generally the demand for the tiles is small and the Indians cannot produce enough to provide adequate wages for many Mesquakie. In time, however, if the Mesquakie can work

out some sort of mass production process, Tama Crafts might be enlarged to provide a fairly good income for a greater number of Indians.

Although Tama Crafts has not fulfilled the hopes of its founders, another Mesquakie industry, the Pow Wow, has proved to be an unqualified success. In the years after World War II, the attendance at the Pow Wow increased sharply so that by 1950, the earnings from the Pow Wow amounted to \$9,681. This came to about \$25 for each participant who worked every performance.²⁶⁰ With few exceptions, the Pow Wow continued to attract large crowds throughout the 1950's. But the best year in the history of the Pow Wow was 1963 when the Pow Wow attracted more than 25,000 visitors which included 8,000 on Saturday and 10,000 on Sunday. In addition to people from all over this country, there were a number of foreign visitors from countries including Egypt, Iraq, India, Israel, Holland, Japan, and countries of South America. The gate receipts for the Pow Wow produced \$12,999. Each full share amounted to \$21.79.

The extra large crowd for the Sunday Pow Wow caught the Tama merchants completely by surprise. They had not provided directions to the Pow Wow grounds, nor had they provided places for visitors to sleep and eat. The lack of preparation on the part of the city of Tama drew a number of complaints from the visitors as well as a strong protest from the Tama News-Herald.²⁶¹

As an economic venture, the Pow Wow is a potential gold mine for the city of Tama as well as for the Mesquakie themselves. So far, however, the citizens of Tama have done little to capitalize on the Pow Wow other than to accept what business comes their way by accident.

To many people, the American Indian is still the romantic figure portrayed in the movies and in books. The Mesquakie are in an excellent position to capitalize on this romanticism because they are the first Indian tribe that tourists can meet when driving west across the Mississippi River. Unfortunately few people, even in Iowa, are aware of the Mesquakie Indians living near Tama. Interest has been increasing in recent years, however, so perhaps, one day, the Mesquakie will become one of the main tourist attractions in Iowa.

CHAPTER XVII

MESQUAKIE LIFE TODAY

During their years in Iowa since 1857, the Mesquakie managed to maintain their independence and Indian way of life. They did adopt some of the white ways that proved beneficial to them, but in so doing they remained Indians. The future of the Mesquakie remains uncertain, however, because of the many problems that confront them. Their biggest problem continues to be an economic one. The average income of the Mesquakie community is not much more than \$1,000 per year. While this amount seems quite low, the Indians do not face grinding poverty because they do not have the expenses that white communities do. The Mesquakie are not concerned with owning a big, fancy house--just to have a place to live in and be sheltered from the elements is enough for most of the tribe. Furthermore, there is no attitude of "keeping up with the Joneses" that prevails in many white communities. The Mesquakie generally do not strive to become wealthy and in fact disapprove of those Indians who do.²⁶²

In addition to their small annual income, local, state, and federal agencies provide them with a number of services. The federal government pays part or all of the cost of most of these services. The services presently available to them include Old Age Pension (50% state and 50% federal money), Aid to Dependent Children (50% state, 50% federal), Disabled

Veterans' Pension (25% local, 25% state, 50% federal), Settlement Indian Relief (\$15,000 federal), Foster Care Program (\$30,000 federal), Public Health Program (\$30,000 - \$36,000 federal), and a Vocational Rehabilitation Program (100% federal).²⁶³ The federal government provides the Public Health Program by means of a negotiated contract between the Public Health Service of Iowa, the Indian Service, and the State Department of Social Welfare. The contract provides health service to Indians and pays for licensed physicians, medical specialists, clinical and laboratory services, and other allied medical services.²⁶⁴ In addition to these services, the government pays the cost of operating the Sac and Fox Day School, and pays the tuition of approximately thirty Mesquakie children attending Tama-Toledo Consolidated School.

Many of the Mesquakie do not need government help, but provide for their families by farming or working in and around Tama. Unfortunately, the number of jobs available to Indians in Tama County is limited. Consequently, more than two hundred Mesquakie, out of a total population of more than seven hundred, must leave the settlement to live and work in cities throughout Iowa and in neighboring states. The families that leave, however, do not lose their interest in the settlement and many return to Tama as often as once or twice a month to visit friends and relatives. Some of the Mesquakie families live so far away that they can return only once a year, but even they look forward to the time when they can retire and live on the

settlement. Dean Sol Tax, one of the University of Chicago anthropologists who worked with the Mesquakie in Tama, believes that this homing instinct will enable the tribe to survive indefinitely in spite of the impact of present day civilization.²⁶⁵

The settlement provides a sense of security for the Mesquakie. It provides them with a sense of belonging and of familiarity. The Mesquakie express considerable pride in the settlement and proudly point out to visitors that they actually own the 4,000 acres of land on which they live. In addition to the land, the Mesquakie language continues to hold the Indians together. Everyone on the settlement can speak their native tongue. In fact, the children do not speak English until they attend the first grade at the Sac and Fox Day School.²⁶⁶

Without a doubt, however, the annual Pow Wow provides the greatest single unifying force on the settlement. Besides the financial return that the Mesquakie receive from the Pow Wow, it is also an important social event. The Pow Wow serves as a focal point for Mesquakie interests and cooperation. In spite of the factional differences that have kept the tribal council from functioning effectively, the Indians have no trouble at all in organizing and operating the Pow Wow. The committee in charge puts on the dances, sells souvenirs and refreshments, arranges for publicity, lights, bleachers, traffic direction and other necessary duties.

The Mesquakie come from all over for the Pow Wow.

Families who live away and whose children have forgotten how to speak the language come back and camp on the Pow Wow grounds. The young people away at college come home and the boys in the service try to get furloughs.

The whole process of getting ready for the Pow Wow begins about a month or so before the actual event. Around the middle of July, the Mesquakie start going down to the Pow Wow grounds just to practice, and as the week of the event draws near, practices get more frequent until there are people dancing every night. The week before the event, many of the Mesquakie set up wickiups on the grounds so they will not miss anything that happens. During the Pow Wow, people will take time off from good paying jobs in order to work at the Pow Wow for 80 cents an hour or for nothing.

The Pow Wow is really a community festival. It is the one time during the year when the Mesquakie can get together and visit and just have fun. It is during this time that the community draws itself together and appears most strongly as a people. At this time of year they all seem to be saying to themselves as well as to the white man, "We are the Mesquakie, we are Indians, we are not white men and we are not going to disappear."²⁶⁷

CHAPTER XVIII

THE YEARS AHEAD

Unfortunately, the Mesquakie will encounter other problems besides economic ones in the years ahead. The succeeding generations of Mesquakie will have to face the very real possibility of the withdrawal of the federal government from the supervision of Indian Affairs. Ever since the State of Iowa transferred jurisdiction of the Mesquakie to the federal government in 1896, the citizens of Tama County, and the Indians themselves, have considered the Mesquakie as wards of the federal government. If the government continues to pursue its policies of termination, then the state and local governments will have to assume the responsibility for the Indians. Such an action will place the administration of the Indian's affairs under the direction of the very people with whom the Mesquakie must compete for land, tax dollars, welfare, and health services. The Mesquakie, of course, strongly oppose any plan that would place them in such a position, for they realize that the state and local governments have fewer resources than the federal government. Thus they fear that under state supervision, they will have to pay higher taxes in order to receive the services the federal government now provides. The Mesquakie believe they cannot pay the cost of such services because they lack the money.

On the other hand, the county and the state officials do

not want the federal government to drop the Indian problem in their laps.¹ They believe that the responsibility for the Indians rests with the federal government and that the cost of providing the various services to the Indians would overburden state and county resources.² Thus the government's announced policy of termination has resulted in an increasing antagonism between the Indians and the surrounding white community.²⁶⁸

In addition to causing considerable tension in the white and Indian communities, the government's policy of termination is forcing the Mesquakie Indians to choose between a century of dependence upon the federal government and a life of freedom from governmental control.³ If they accept the first choice, they must also accept governmental interference in their affairs, which they do not want.⁴ If they accept the second choice, then they must cut themselves off from the financial assistance as well.⁵ For the Mesquakie, neither choice is desirable, and the resulting dilemma leads to a life of constant frustration.⁶ Thus in a situation where the Mesquakie must either sink or swim, they have managed somehow to float.²⁶⁹

The Indian policies of the federal government seem to change with each generation as the same old ideas are tried over and over again.⁷ Over the years the Mesquakie have come to realize that they can expect no consistency in policies regarding them.⁸ No matter what policy the government follows today, tomorrow it will be different--even opposite.⁹

Furthermore, they know that whatever the policy enacted, the Indian will be told that such policy is "in his best interests" or is "for his own good."²⁷⁰

Perhaps, someday, someone will hit upon the idea of asking the Mesquakie Indians what they really want and allow them to make their own choice (free of conditions) between what they want and what they think the white man wants them to want. Perhaps then the government will find a solution to the Indian problem. Only time will tell.

NOTES

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4. Ibid., p. 5.
5. Ibid., p. 7; In a personal interview on the Mesquakie settlement at Tama, Iowa, 13 August 1963, George Young Bear told the author that no matter where an Indian traveled, he could usually recognize the tribal affiliation of a strange Indian by his style of dress. Therefore, when strange Indians spoke, they first gave their clan names, many of which were common among most Indian tribes. Thus, if they had the same clan name, they considered themselves brothers, for they had a common bond.
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12. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
13. Ibid., p. 18.

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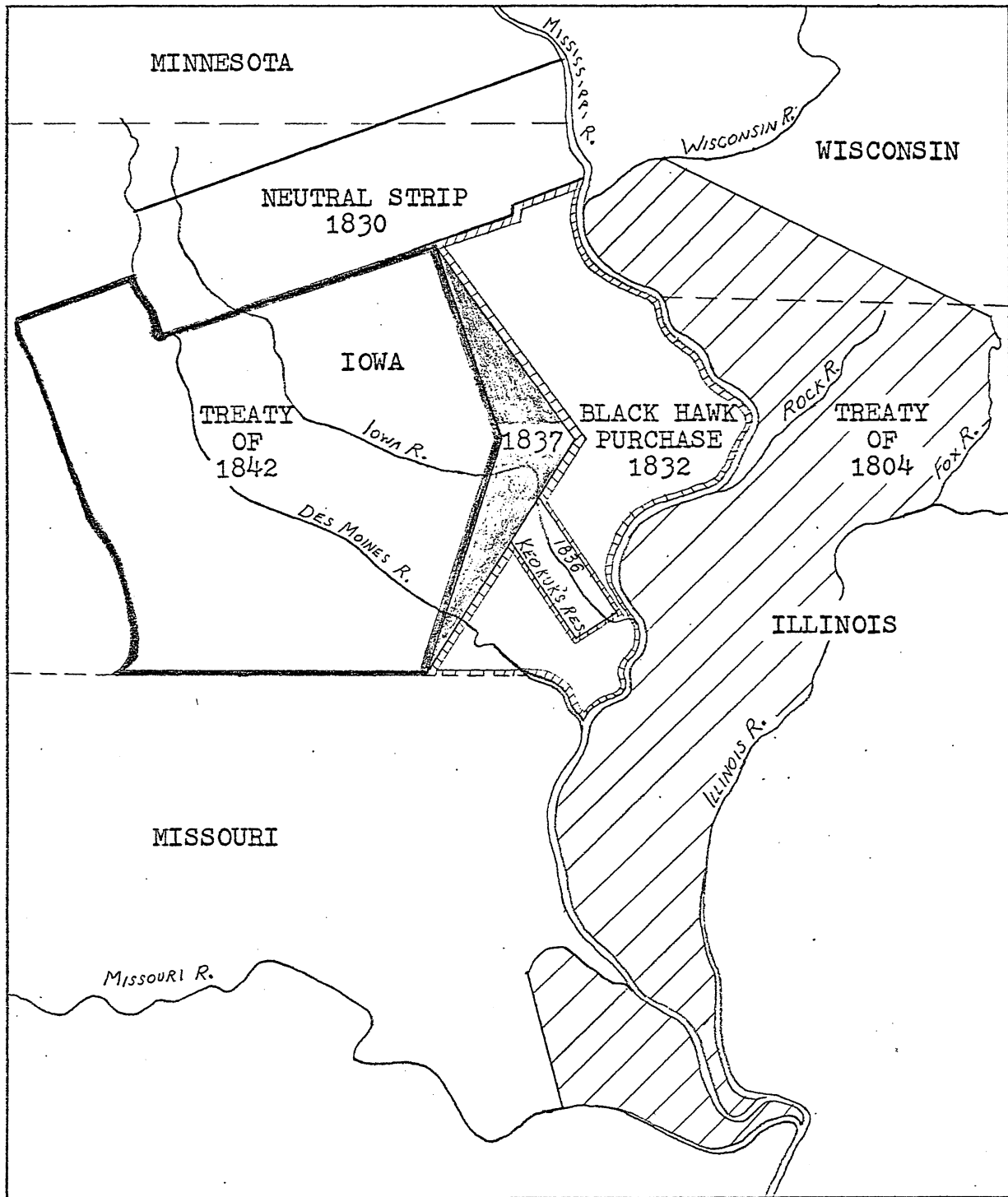


Fig. 1. Map A: Sac and Fox Land Cessions, 1804 to 1842

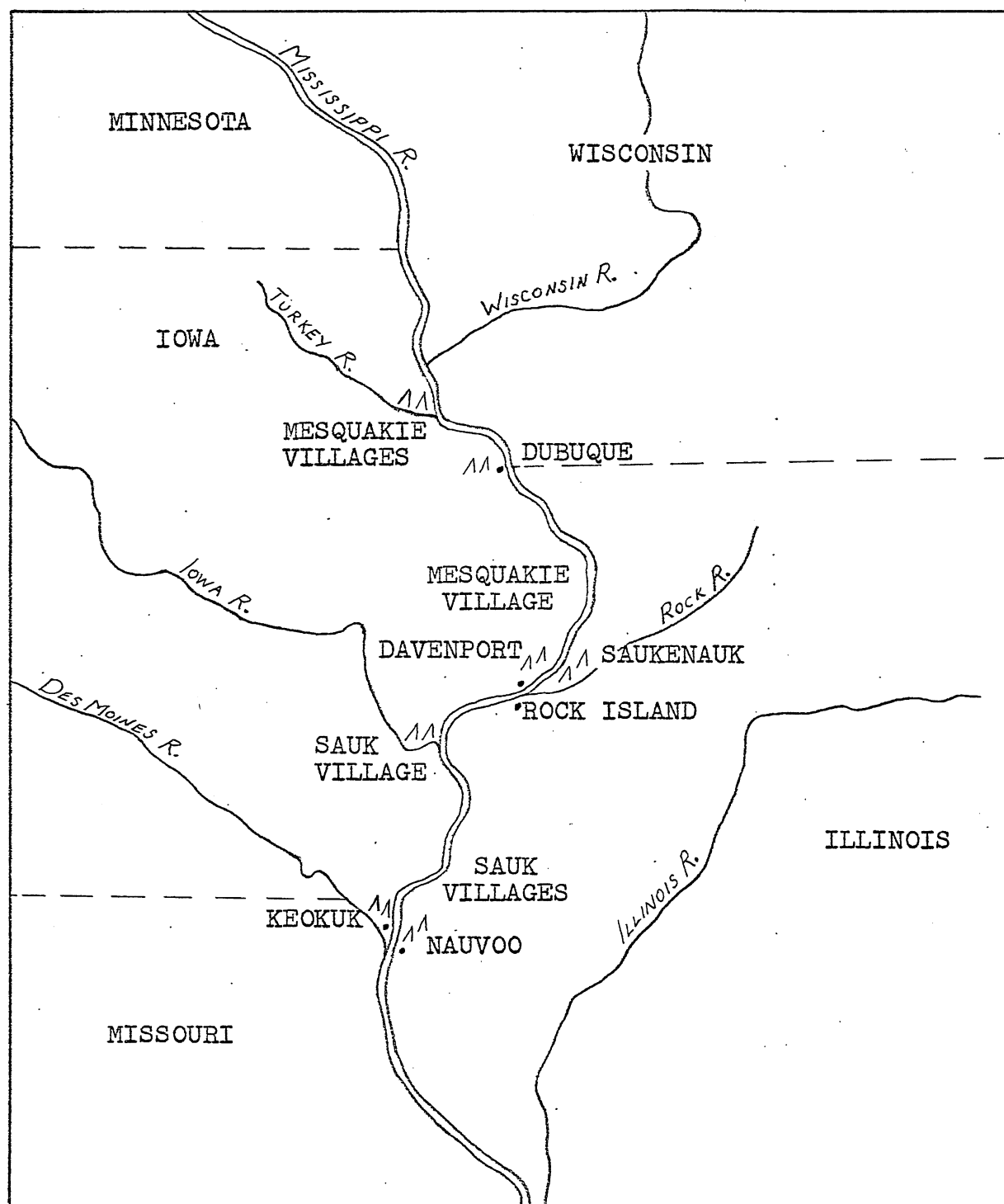


Fig. 2. Map B: Sauk and Mesquakie Villages, 1800

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